

# THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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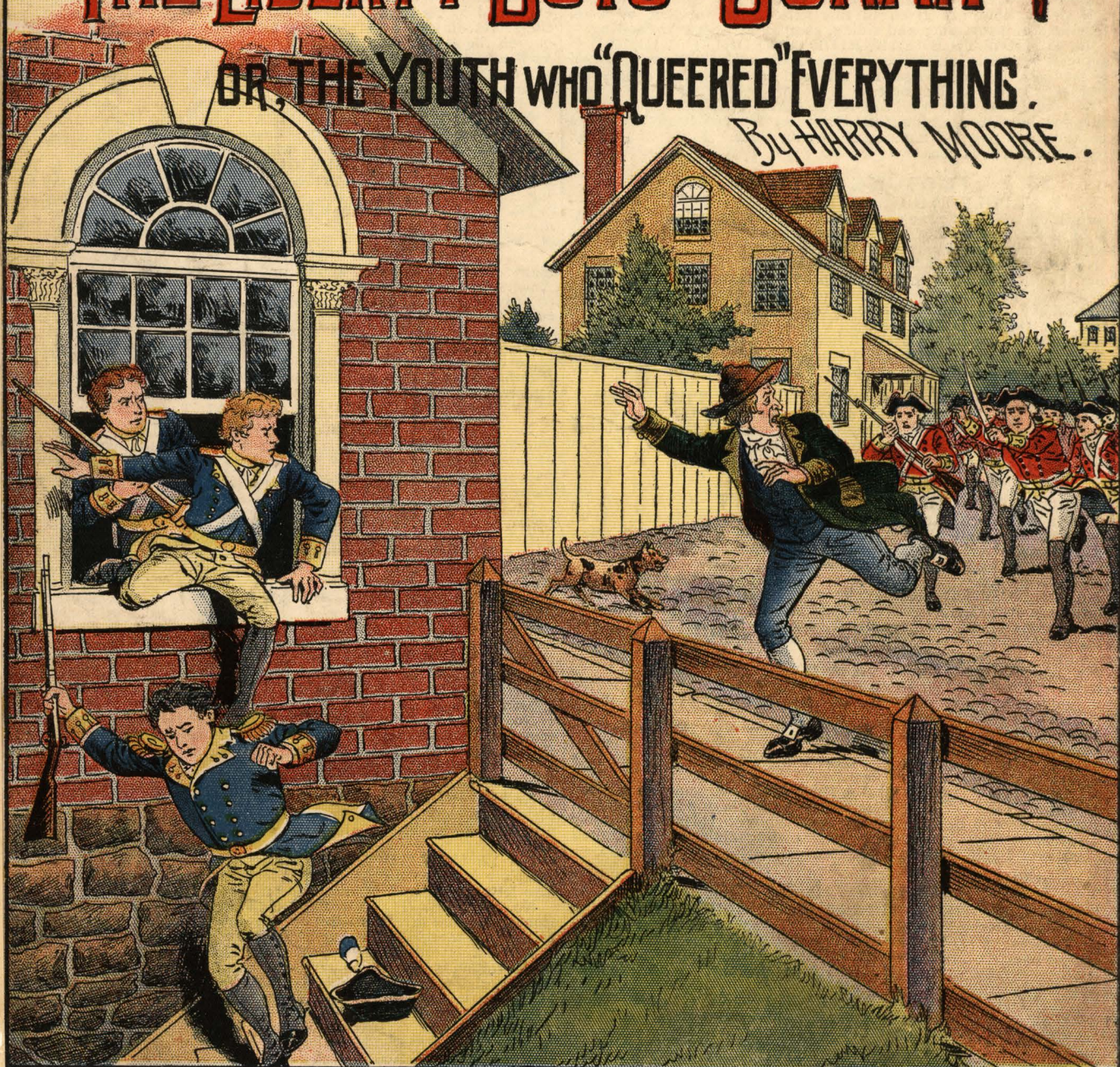
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## THE LIBERTY BOYS' "JONAH";

OR, THE YOUTH WHO "QUEERED" EVERYTHING.

By HARRY MOORE.



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NEW YORK, APRIL 25, 1902.

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## CHAPTER I.

### JIM AND THE REDCOAT.

"Dad-bing ther redcoats, ennyhow—thet's whut I say! Dad-bing 'em!"

"Hello! what's the matter, my boy? And what are you 'dad-binging' the redcoats for?" "

The first speaker was a gawky-looking country youth, dressed in the blue homespun such as was worn by the majority of the farming people of the South at the time of which we write—midsummer of the year 1781. The youth was perhaps eighteen years old. The other speaker was a man of perhaps forty years, and was one who, although dressed in citizen's clothing, showed by his bearing that he was one who had seen military training—but, of course, the youth in question could not see this. The man was not bad-looking, having regular features, and a mustache and imperial, but there was something in his expression which would have warned the close observer that he was a man to fight shy of.

The youth, when he gave utterance to the remark given above, was standing beside the road, looking down upon head, skin, hoofs, etc., of a cow that had evidently recently been killed. The main portion of the body was gone. The man had stepped out from among the trees at the farther side of the road and had advanced quietly, being near enough when the youth spoke to hear what he said. He had then made the remark which we have given above. The place where these two individuals stood was on the main road leading northward from Petersburg, in Virginia, and about five miles from the town.

When the youth heard the strange voice he uttered an exclamation of surprise, not unmixed with alarm, and whirled around. He stared at the newcomer for a few moments in silence and then said:

"Who be you, mister?"

"Who am I?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't know as it matters particularly who I am. What I wish to know is, who are you?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

The youth scratched his head and looked at the man somewhat dubiously. Finally he said: "I'm Jim."

"Jim, eh?"

"Yes."

"Jim what?"

"Jim—Slocum." It was evident that the youth was a bit chary about telling who he was. He was smart enough to know that it was possible that the stranger might be an enemy. "Still," said Jim to himself, "I guess he hain't er redcoat, fur he hain't got no unyform on, an' I never seen no redcoats yit without unyforms on."

"Humph!" the man remarked. "So your name is Jim Slocum, is it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, why didn't you say so?"

"I—I—did."

"Not at first; you hesitated."

"Waal, I—I didn' m-mean to, mister."

"All right; but where do you live, Jim?"

"'Bout ha'f er mile erway."

"I asked you where you live; not how far it is to the house."

"Oh, et's right over thet way, mister!" pointing.

"In the timber?"

"Waal, we've got er clearin' thar, ye know."

"No, I don't know; how big a clearing is it?"

"Fifteen acres."

"Hum! And I suppose you have parents?"

"Yes, mister."

"You have father and mother both still alive, then?"

"Yes, mister."

"Any other relatives?"

"I got er sister."

"Oh, you have?"

"Yep."

"What is your sister's name?"

"Sal."

"Sal, eh?"



"Yes, mister."

"How old is she?"

"I dunno."

"You don't know?"

"No."

"Humph! Do you know how old you are?"

The youth shook his head. "No, I don', mister."

"Could you give a guess regarding your age?"

"I guess I could."

"Well, how old would you guess that you are?"

"'Bout—'bout—ten years old, I guess."

"Oh, bosh! you're older than that."

"D'ye think so?"

"Yes; you must be eighteen or nineteen years old."

"Waal, I guess I am, ef ye say so."

"Of course you are; and your sister—is she older or younger than you?"

"Neether wun, mister."

The man started. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"Why, ye see, I've heerd dad'n mam say ez how't me'n Sal is twos."

"Heard them say what?"

"Thet Sal'n me is twos."

The man laughed. "You mean twins," he said.

Jim ducked his head. "Yas, thet's et," he acknowledged.

"I knowed thet we wuz somethin' thet meant theer wuz two uv us."

"Then Sal is the same age as yourself."

"I guess she is, mister."

"Are there any more children?"

"Yep."

"Humph! How many?"

"I dunno, mister; I never counted 'em."

"What's that—don't know how many brothers and sisters you have?"

"I hain't never counted 'em, mister—ter tell the trooth, I kain't count; but I kin name 'em over."

"Well, go ahead and name them, and I'll keep count."

"All right, mister; air ye ready?"

"Yes, go ahead."

"Waal, theer's Pete'n Bill'n Sam'n 'Lizy'n Bob'n Joe'n Josy—they's twos erg'in, mister—an' theer's Tom'n Mark'n Frank'n Jule'n Sue."

The youth paused, and the man looked at him inquiringly and half expectantly and asked: "Is that all?"

Jim scratched his head and looked thoughtful. "Lemme see," he half murmured, "I named Pete'n Bill'n Sam'n 'Lizy'n Bob'n Joe'n Josy'n Tom'n Mark'n Frank'n Jule'n Sue—yas, thet's all uv 'em."

"Humph! you are sure? You haven't forgotten any?"

Again the youth scratched his head. Then he shook it slowly. "No, I hain't furgot enny," he replied positively; "them's all uv 'em."

"Humph! That isn't many—only twelve, a round dozen!" The man spoke sarcastically, but it was lost on Jim.

"No, thet hain't very menny," he replied slowly; "but air me'n Sal counted ermong 'em, ter make theer duzzen?"

"No; you and Sal make the number fourteen."

"Thet's more'n er duzzen, hain't et?"

The man laughed. "Yes, that's more than a dozen," he replied. "And now, what I wish to ask is, why were you 'dad-binging' the redcoats just now?"

Jim hesitated. The other noted this and said, authoritatively: "Go on, tell me."

"Waal, ef I mus', I mus', I guess."

"Certainly; go ahead. What have the redcoats, as you call them, done to you?"

The youth pointed to the head, hide, hoofs, etc., of the defunct cow and said: "D'ye see them?"

The man nodded. "Yes, I see them," he replied. "What about them?"

"Them's all thet is lef' uv er cow, mister."

"Yes, so I should judge, though I don't know much about such things."

"Ye kin see ez how et wuz er red cow, kain't ye?" indicating the hide, which showed plainly that the cow had, in life, indeed been a red one.

"An' ye kin see thet she hed er white spot in 'er forrerd, kain't ye?"

"Yes, I notice that."

"An' thet she hed three white feet?"

"Yes, that is patent also."

"Is—whut, mister?"

"I say that that is plain to be seen."

"Oh, yas; an' ye kin see thet wun uv ther horns wuz ha'f turned an' p'inted out sideways instid uv p'intin' up like ther other?"

"Yes, I can see that."

"Waal, our ole cow, Sukey, hed all them air marks an' peccoliarities."

"Ah! Then I am to infer that this is your cow?"

"I don' know whut ye mean by 'infur,' mister."

"I mean that I suppose I am to understand that this cow is yours."

"She wuz our'n."

"Yes, that is what I mean."



"She hain't er cow, now, ye know, mister. Thar hain't nothin' lef' but ther head, hide, hoofs'n tail."

"So I observe."

"So ye—whut?"

"So I see."

"Yes, ennybuddy c'u'd see thet."

"But what has that to do with your swearing at the redcoats?"

"I wuzn't sw'arin' at ther redcoats."

"But I heard you."

"Heerd me sw'arin'?"

"Certainly I did."

"W'y, mister, I dunno how ter sw'ar."

"I think you do. Didn't I hear you say, 'Dad-bing the redcoats'?"

The youth grinned. "Yas, I guess ye heerd me say thet," he admitted.

"Well, that is swearing."

"Whut! Sayin' 'dad-bing'?"

"Certainly."

The youth shook his head. "I don' b'leeve et, mister. I don' sw'ar; never sw'ared in my life—but ef dad-bing wuz sw'arin', I'd let et stan'!"

"You would?"

"Yes."

"Why are you so bitter against the redcoats?"

"W'y? Becos they killed our cow, thet's w'y!"

The man nodded. "That is why you were talking against them, eh?" he remarked. "You think they killed your cow?"

"I am shore they did."

"What makes you sure of it?"

"Waal, who else would do et?"

"Perhaps some of your neighbors might have done it."

The youth shook his head. "No, they didn' do et," he declared; "I know they didn'."

"How do you know they didn'?"

"Waal, I think so, becos—becos——"

"Because—what?"

"Becos we've hed nabors fur twenty yeers, an' we've hed this cow fur six er seven yeers, an' nobuddy ever killed 'er before; but ther redcoats hev on'y be'n at Petersburg a leetle w'ile, an' now the cow hez be'n killed. Don' thet prove thet ther redcoats done et?"

The man shook his head. "No, it doesn't prove it by any means," he said.

The youth looked surprised. "Et don'?" he exclaimed.

"No; it is very clever reasoning, especially for a youth

who, like yourself, seems to be rather deficient in reasoning faculties, but it is not proof."

"I didn' exackly unnerstan' all ye said, mister."

"No, I suppose not; but you understand that it does not prove that the redcoats killed your cow."

The youth was silent a few moments. "Mebby et don' prove et," he said, "but I'd bet er doughnut thet they done et!"

"You had better be careful what you say, young man!" in a somewhat stern and threatening tone.

"W-whut d'ye mean, mister?"

"Just what I say—that you had better be careful how you accuse the redcoats without proof, and you had better be very careful about applying epithets to them."

"W'y, mister?"

"Because I, myself, am a redcoat!"

## CHAPTER II.

### JIM IN TROUBLE.

Jim's underjaw dropped. He stared at the man in amazement, not unmixed with fear.

"Ye mean ter say ez how ye air er redcoat?" he cried.

"That is just what I mean to say."

"Did ye he'p kill our ole cow?"

"Why, no, of course I didn't!" was the reply in an angry voice. "What do you mean by being insolent to me, you young rebel scoundrel?"

"Who sed I wuz er rebel?"

"I say so!"

"You say so?"

"Yes!"

"Whut makes ye think thet?"

"Why, your own language. Didn't I hear you 'dad-binging' the redcoats?"

Jim couldn't deny this, and he tried to put on a bold front. "Yes, ye did heer me 'dad-binging' ther redcoats," he acknowledged; "but thet don' prove thet I'm er rebel, enny more'n whut I sed erbout never hevin' hed our ole cow killed fur yeers by ther nabors, an' then her gittin' killed ez soon ez ther redcoats come ter this part uv ther country proves thet the redcoats done et. Ye know, ye sed, yourself, thet et wuzn't proof."

The man smiled grimly. "You aren't such a fool as you look, Jim," he remarked quietly; "you have made out a pretty fair case, but, at the same time, I am sure you are a rebel."



"I don' see w'y ye sh'd be."

"Well, I do. The fact that you spoke so bitterly against them is proof sufficient to my mind."

Jim looked somewhat worried. "Wouldn't ye a-be'n kinder bitter ag'inst ennybuddy ez killed a cow thet b'longed ter ye?" he asked, presently.

"Well, I suppose I should have been; but I would first secure proof before accusing. You accused the redcoats immediately, without stopping to consider that somebody else might have done the deed."

"But I know nobuddy else done et," said the youth, doggedly.

"Oh, you are still of the opinion that the redcoats did it, are you?" severely.

"Yes, I am."

"And what are you going to do about it?"

"Nothin'."

"Nothing, eh?"

"Thet's whut I sed."

"Well, it is lucky you are not going to do anything or try to do anything. It would be bad for you if you were to make any attempt to get revenge or anything like that."

"Oh, I hain't ergoin' ter try ter do ennythin'—fur ther reezon thet et wouldn't do me enny good ter try."

The man looked at the youth sternly. "Then I am to understand that you would do something if you thought you could succeed?"

The youth nodded. "Thet's whut I would!" he declared.

"Then you don't like the redcoats—you are a rebel, just as I said!"

"I don' say I am er rebel—but I do say thet ef I c'u'd git even with ther fellers ez killed our ole cow, I'd do et! An' so would you, ef ye wuz in my place."

"Well, I would first make sure I was right, before I would go to accusing any one. You haven't done that; you simply made up your mind that the redcoats did it, and that settled it."

"Waal, I know they done et."

An angry exclamation escaped the lips of the man. "You are incorrigible," he said; "you haven't much sense, and I think I shall have to teach you some!"

"Whut d'ye mean?" asked the youth, a look of alarm appearing on his freckled face.

"I mean just what I say. I am going to put you through a course of sprouts. Men, come forth!" As he spoke he half turned and made a gesture toward the timber at the farther side of the road, and four men, dressed like himself, emerged from among the trees and approached.

Jim Slocum showed unmistakable signs of uneasiness

now, and looked about him as if contemplating flight. The man saw this, and evidently knew what was passing in the youth's mind, for he said sternly: "Don't you try to get away! If you do, I shall not hesitate to put a bullet through you!" And he tapped the butt of a pistol, which, until that moment, had escaped Jim's notice.

"Say, ye wouldn' shoot er feller, would ye?" he asked, with a look of terror on his face.

"Well, I would certainly shoot you if you tried to run away."

"Oh, I hain't ergoin' ter run erway, mister; ye needn' be erfeerd uv thet, but—but—I think ez how't I'm needed ter hum, an'—an' ef et's jest ther same ter ye I think I'll jes' go hum now."

"Oh, no, you won't do anything of the kind, Jim!" was the cool reply. "At any rate, not just now you won't. We have something to say to you, first."

"W-whut d'ye want say ter me?"

"Oh, a number of things."

"But I hain't got no time ter spare, mister; I—I—mus' go hum; I know ther folks is lookin' fur me, an' wonderin' w'y I don' cum hum with ther cow."

"Oh, they won't miss you if you don't go home at all!" with a grim smile. "There are so many of you, they couldn't miss you." Then he turned to his four comrades and said: "Guess how many brothers and sisters this youth has."

"Six," said one.

"Seven."

"Five."

"Nine."

"You come the nearest it," to the last; "but you didn't go high enough."

"How many brothers and sisters has he, then, for goodness sake?" asked one.

"Thirteen."

"Great Scott!"

"You don't mean it!"

"Thirteen!"

"That beats anything I've heard of lately!"

"Yes, he has thirteen brothers and sisters, so he tells me; and so his plea of being needed at home is worth nothing."

"Nothing at all."

"No, they wouldn't miss him if he never came back."

"They could easily spare him."

"Of course they could!"

Jim turned pale, and was nervous. "I'm ther on'y big boy," he said, "an' dad depen's on me ter do mos' uv ther



work. Ye hed better let me go. They would shore miss me ef I didn' come hum."

The leader of the party of men shook his head, a grim look on his face. "I can't let you go," he said; "you have talked like a rebel, and have used hard language toward the redcoats, accusing them of something which they probably did not do, and you must answer for that."

"I—I— didn' say nothin' ag'inst ther redcoats, mister."

"Yes, you did. I heard you. You said, 'Dad-bing ther redcoats, ennyhow.' You can't deny it."

"Waal, I—I— didn' mean ennythin'."

"Yes, you did!" severely. "You are a rebel at heart! Don't you think so, men?" to his companions.

"Yes, yes!"

"Of course!"

"He looks like a rebel!"

"And no one but a rebel would talk that way about the redcoats."

"You see," said the man, "my men think as I do about this matter, and as there are plenty of Slocums left, we might as well make an example of you so as to warn the rest of the family and make them stay loyal to the king. Don't you think so, men?"

The men, of course, said they thought so, and then their leader asked them in what way they should punish the rebel.

"Shall we shoot him or hang him?" he asked.

Two said shoot him, the other two being in favor of hanging.

"That leaves it for me to cast the deciding vote," said the leader; "so I shall decide in favor of hanging."

"All right, that settles it," said one of the men; "come on, you young rebel!" grasping Jim by the arm. "Come right along over here to this big tree. There is a splendid limb from which to swing you, and you will be seen by everybody that comes along the road. It will be a good warning to other rebels."

Jim was terribly frightened. He thought sure that his last day had come. He struggled and held back, but in the hands of two of the men he was helpless, and his struggles availed him nothing.

They were soon underneath the limb of the tree the redcoat had spoken of, and one of the four disappeared and was gone perhaps a minute. When he returned he brought a rope. In the end of this rope he made a running noose which he threw over the head of Jim. Meanwhile his comrades had fastened the youth's hands together behind his back, with one of their belts, and he could not offer resistance. He pleaded, however, with all the energy of desperation.

"Please, misters, don' hang me!" he said. "I—I— didn't mean nothin' by whut I sed erbout ther redcoats. I—I—think ther redcoats is mighty nice peeple—I—"

"That won't do at all," interrupted the leader of the party; "you are simply saying that because you see that your life is in danger. You don't mean it at all."

"Of course he doesn't," said another; "he is bitter against us in his heart."

"No, I hain't!" protested Jim.

"Yes, you are! Lies won't avail you now!"

"Not a bit of it; we have made up our minds to make an example of you, and you must die!"

"Oh-h-h-h-h-h!" groaned the youth; "don' hang me, misters! Please don't!"

"That is just what we are going to do."

"Oh-h-h-h-h-h-h! Say, I don' wanter die!"

"Of course you don't; few people do. It is necessary, however, in order that the rebels in this part of the country may be taught a lesson. You will have to be resigned to your fate, and make up your mind to die the death of a martyr."

"But I don' wanter be no martyr—whutever thet is."

"It doesn't matter what you want. It is what we want that counts."

"Waal, don' hang me'n I'll never say anythin' erg'inst ther redcoats erg'in, even ef they kill our other cow!"

The men shook their heads. "It won't do, my rebel friend," said the leader; "you have waited a bit too long. We are going to hang you, and nothing can save you now!"

"Ye don' mean et!" gasped the youth. "Shorely ye won' hang me!"

"Yes, that is just what we are going to do. George, climb up and pass the end of the rope over that limb."

One of the men seized the rope and quickly climbed up the tree and passed the end of the rope over the limb and on down to his comrades, who seized it and drew it taut.

"Oh—ow!" gasped Jim, as he felt the rope tighten.

"D-don' do thet! Yer e-chokin' m-me!"

The men laughed harshly. "Choking you, eh?" remarked one.

"Y-yes!"

"Well, that is just what we want to do."

"You'll be choked worse than that in a minute!" from another.

"Oh-h-h-h-h-h-h! Say, p-please d-don' h-hang m-me, m-misters!" pleaded the frightened youth.

"It will do you no good to beg now!" was the cold reply. "Is there anything you wish to say before we string you up?"



"Y-yes, I—I—w-want ter say er lot! D-don' pull so t-tight with ther rope. I c-can't t-talk ef ye d-do."

"Well, hurry and say what you have to say. We are in a hurry and have no time to fool away."

"I'll b-bet thet ef et wuz wun uv ye fellers wuz in my place ye wouldn' be in s-sech er h-hurry!" stammered Jim, whereat the redcoats laughed aloud.

"The fellow says some things that are to the point," remarked the leader of the band.

"Yes; I guess that statement of his is about the truth," acknowledged another.

"Say, don' hang me!" pleaded Jim. "I hain't done nothin' ter be hung fur, an' I'll never say er word erg'inst ther redcoats erg'in so long ez I live!"

"If that is all you have to say we will end the affair," said the leader; "we have no time to waste listening to you begging to be released, for we are not going to do anything of the kind."

"Then ye air goin' ter hang me, shore enuff?"

"We most assuredly are!"

Jim knew, from the man's tone, that he meant what he said, and now, for the first time, he thought of crying out for aid. "W'y didn' I think uv thet afore?" he asked himself. "Somebuddy might be in hearin' uv my voice an' come ter my reskue. I'll yell my bes', fur they're goin' ter hang me, ennyhow!"

Then he lifted up his voice, suddenly, and yelled at the full power of his lungs: "Help! help! Murder! Thieves! Redcoats! Help! Help!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### DICK AND BOB APPEAR.

Two handsome, bronzed-faced youths were riding along the road leading southward toward Petersburg, and about five miles from the town, on this same afternoon of which we have been writing. The youths were dressed in ordinary citizen's clothing, but there was an air about them that betokened the trained soldier.

And such they were, for the youths in question were Dick Slater, captain of the company of "Liberty Boys," who had made themselves famous, and Bob Estabrook, his hight-hand man and nearest and dearest friend and chum.

"How far are we from Petersburg, do you think, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I judge five or six miles, Bob," was the reply.

"How far are we going in that direction?"

"I hardly know; I will let circumstances decide."

"Don't you think we are liable to encounter some redcoats if we venture too far down that way, old man?"

"Oh, we might; still, I hardly expect it."

"We had better keep our eyes open, anyway."

"True; it pays to do that, always."

"We might encounter a foraging party, you know."

"Yes, that is possible."

Just at this moment they were startled by hearing an agonized voice crying: "Help! help! Murder! Thieves! Redcoats! Help! Help!"

They reined up their horses and looked at each other inquiringly. "What does it mean, Dick?" from Bob.

"Some one in deadly peril, I judge; and likely it is a patriot, for he called out the word, 'Redcoats,' as you heard."

"That's right. Shall we go to his aid, Dick?"

"Yes, Bob; there may be a band of redcoats, but we can't ignore a cry like that and leave the poor fellow to his fate. So come along, and we will take our chances of encountering an overpowering band of redcoats!"

The cry had come from just around a bend in the road, and the timber shut out a view of the spot whence the cry had come, but the two dashed quickly around the bend and came in sight of the scene in a jiffy.

The quick eyes of the youths took in all the details of the situation in a twinkling. They saw that some poor fellow was on the point of being swung into Eternity, and they noted that there were five of the men who were about to do the deed. This was considerable odds, but the youths had encountered greater odds, many times, and were still alive to tell of it, and they did not hesitate now. Forward they dashed with the speed of the wind, and as they drew near the startled group they began yelling at the top of their voices: "Come on, boys! We have the scoundrels! Come along!"

The five redcoats had at first started to draw their pistols as if with the intention of offering battle, but at the cries from the newcomers they changed their minds. Evidently they thought there were others coming, and while they would have fought two they did not dare stay and risk having to encounter a dozen or possibly a score. So with yells of rage and discomfiture, they turned, and, plunging into the timber, disappeared from view.

Dick and Bob fired a couple of shots after the fleeing men, and, reining up their horses, leaped to the ground.

"Save me! Save me!" cried Jim Slocum, pale with fright. "Oh, save me from them redcoats! They wuz goin' ter hang me!"



The youths paid no attention to the youth, but leaving their horses standing they plunged into the timber, and, like the redcoats, disappeared from Jim's sight.

"Oh, them redcoats'll come back an' hang me, arter all!" he murmured, his teeth almost chattering. "I'll run w'ile I hev ther chance. I'll git fur hum, an' they'll ontie my arms theer."

He was just starting to run away from the spot when the two youths again put in an appearance.

"Hold on!" cried Dick. "Wait, and we'll free your arms."

Jim paused and came back reluctantly. "Hurry, then," he said; "them redcoats is lible ter come back at enny minnet."

"No; they are half a mile away, and riding like the wind toward Petersburg," said Bob; "you needn't be afraid of them."

"Is thet so, shore enuff?" asked Jim, his face brightening.

"Yes, that's so."

Jim looked up the road. "Whur's ther res' uv yer fellers?" he asked.

"There are no more," was the reply.

Jim looked at the speaker in surprise. "Ye don' mean ter say thet theer is on'y two uv ye?" he exclaimed.

"That is all."

"An' ye run five redcoats cl'ar erway?"

"You saw them go," smiled Dick.

"And they are riding down the road, as I said, as fast as they can make their horses go," added Bob.

"Waal, thet beats me!"

Jim was surprised, and he stared at the youths in wondering admiration, after they had freed his arms, and he asked: "Who air ye fellers, ennyway?"

"It doesn't matter who we are," replied Dick; "the question is, who are you?"

"My name's Jim—Jim Slocum."

"Where do you live?"

"'Bout ha'f er mile erway, over in thet direckshun." He pointed with his fingers, to indicate the direction.

"Well, who were those men who were about to hang you, Jim?"

"They wuz redcoats."

"But they did not have on British uniforms."

"I know thet; but they sed they wuz redcoats."

"Why were they going to hang you?"

"Fur talkin' sassy erbout redcoats."

"Oh, that was it?"

"Yes."

"Then they must have been redcoats, sure enough."

"Oh, yes, they wuz redcoats."

"And you must be a patriot."

Jim nodded. "I think I am—now!" he said, clenching his fist and assuming a pugnacious aspect of countenance. "I wuzn't nothin' neether way afore, but now thet ther redcoats hev killed our ole red cow, an' come purty nigh ter hangin' uv me, I guess I will be er patriot!"

"I don't blame you. They killed your cow, you say?"

"Yes, I'm shore they did, fur who else would 'a' done et—ye didn' do et, did ye?" with a quick look of inquiry.

The youths laughed and shook their heads. "No, we didn't do it," Dick assured him.

"Then ther redcoats done et. I wuz shore they did."

"But why were they about to hang you? I should have thought they had wronged you enough in the killing of your cow without wanting to hang you."

"Waal, ye see, et wuz this way: One uv them fellers heerd me say, 'Dad-bing ther redcoats, ennyway!' and he sed I mus' be er rebel."

"Oh, that was it?"

"Yes."

"And they were going to hang you on that score?"

"No, they wuz goin' ter hang me on thet limb, theer," pointing to the limb over which the rope had been passed.

The youths laughed. "I understand," said Dick; "they said you were a rebel, because they heard you say, 'Dad-bing the redcoats!' and were going to hang you."

"Yes, thet's et."

"It was lucky for you that we happened to come along," said Bob.

"Yer right erbout thet, mister," Jim acknowledged.

"Yes," said Dick, "they would have hanged you without doubt."

"Yes, yer right erbout et, an' I'm much obleeged ter ye; I am fur er fack."

"Oh, that's all right, Jim. We were glad to be able to render you assistance. We are always glad of a chance to strike the redcoats a blow, anyway."

"Then ye fellers air patriots?"

"I don't mind acknowledging, Jim, that we are, now that we know you are inclined that way."

"Waal, now, ye bet I am inclined thet way, sence they killed our ole red cow an' come purty nigh hangin' uv me!"

"I should think that would be sufficient to convert you to the cause of Liberty, even if you hadn't been inclined that way before."

"Yer right erbout thet. An' I'm goin' ter git even with



ther redcoats fur whut they done, ef I kin do et, ye kin bet on thet!"

"It is a natural feeling to wish to have revenge, Jim."

"Ye bet et is, an' I'm goin' ter hev et, too, ef sech er thing is possorable."

"Well, I don't see why it should not be possible."

"Nur me; but say, who air ye two fellers, ennyhow? Ye needn't be afeerd ter tell me, fur I won't tell nobuddy ef ye don't want me ter. One thing is sartin', an' thet is thet I hain't ergoin' ter tell ther redcoats."

"I am sure of that," said Dick, "and so I don't object to telling you who we are. I am Dick Slater, captain of the company of 'Liberty Boys,' and my comrade is Bob Estabrook, also a member of the company."

Jim stared at the two in open-mouthed amazement. "Ye don't mean et?" he almost gasped.

"Certainly. Of course I mean it."

"An' ye air both members uv ther comp'ny uv 'Liberty Boys'?"

"We are, as I have said."

Jim seized Dick's hand and shook it heartily, and then did the same with Bob.

"Say, I'm mighty glad ter see ye!" he exclaimed. "I never 'xpected ter git ter see ye fellers!"

"You never did?"

"No; ye see, ye hev allers be'n erway up North, an' I never thort ye'd git down inter Ole Virginny."

"Well, we are here, as you can see for yourself."

"But whur's ther res' uv ther 'Liberty Boys'? Theer's er hunderd uv ye, hain't there?"

"Yes; they are up at Richmond."

"Oh!"

"Bob and I are down here on a scouting and spying expedition."

"Oh, I unnerstan'."

"Yes; we wish to find out just where the British are, and how many of them there are, what they intend doing, and so forth."

"I see. Waal, I'm mighty glad ye come down this way ter do them things; ef ye hedn't, I guess I'd er be'n dead by this time."

"You are certainly right about that," agreed Bob.

Suddenly Jim's face lighted up. "I've got an idee!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" asked Dick.

"I'll tell ye: Ye see, ther redcoats hev killed our cow an' would a-hung me ef ye hedn't come erlong an' skeered 'em erway, and I want revenge on 'em."

"Certainly; we understand that."

"Waal, I've got er plan thet'll make et so I kin git revenge, ef so be ez ye'll let me do whut I wanten."

"What do you wish to do, Jim?"

"I wanten jine yer comp'ny uv 'Liberty Boys'!"

Jim looked at the youths eagerly and anxiously as he said this. Evidently he was afraid they would refuse to accept him as a member of the company; in truth, they were surprised, for Jim was not the kind of youth whom they would have looked upon as being one who would make a good soldier. Still, they reasoned that with the incentive which he had to want to get at the redcoats he might do very good work. They looked at each other inquiringly, however, and Jim watched both, eagerly and anxiously, as we have said.

"What do you think about it, Bob?" asked Dick, presently.

Bob looked Jim over with an air of quiet amusement. "Do just as you like, Dick," he said. "So far as I am concerned I am quite willing to have him join us."

"Do you mean that you want to join us and stay right with us, Jim?" asked Dick.

"Uv course; jes' like ther res' uv ther fellers."

"You may find it anything but pleasant work."

"I don't keer fur thet; I'm tuff an' used ter roughin' ef All I want is er chance ter git even with ther redcoats."

"What will your folks say?"

"We kin go an' see; but I don't think they'll keer, when they fin' out thet ther redcoats hev killed our red cow an' tried ter hang me."

"Well, we will go and see what your parents have to say about it, and if they are willing we will accept you as a member of our company of 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Hurrah!" cried Jim. "Come erlang; we'll soon know erbout et."

"Hist!" said Dick. "Listen!"

The three listened intently and heard the thunder of horses' hoofs plainly. The sound came from the south, and the three looked at one another dubiously.

"Likely they are redcoats!" said Bob.

"And quite a party of them, too!" from Dick.

"Then let's git erway frum heer in er hurry!" exclaimed Jim. "I don't wanten git hung, arter all!"

Just then a party of horsemen rounded a bend in the road a quarter of a mile to the southward, and came riding furiously up the road. They were dressed in the uniform of the British trooper, and there were at least a score of them. There were five who wore no uniforms, however, and these were undoubtedly the five who had been put to flight by Dick and Bob a short time before. The



had met their comrades and had returned in the hope of redeeming themselves and capturing or killing the youth they had come so near hanging, and the others who had come to his rescue. When they saw the three at the roadside they set up a wild yell.

"There they are! There are the rebels! We have them now! They can't escape!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### JIM BECOMES A "LIBERTY BOY."

"Whut'll we do?" gasped Jim. "We'll all be killed! We'll all be killed!"

"Not a bit of need of allowing ourseves to be killed," said Dick. "Into the timber, quick! We can dodge them there."

The youths whistled to their horses and darted into the timber. The horses followed their masters, which showed that they had been well trained for just such emergencies. Jim, for a few moments, stood as if rooted to the spot. He was staring at the approaching redcoats as if fascinated; he seemed incapable of making a movement.

"Great guns! he will be captured!" cried Dick. "What's the matter with him, anyway?"

"He's so scared he can't move," replied Bob; "I'll fetch him!"

As he spoke Bob darted back, and, seizing Jim, hustled him into the timber. "Wake up!" cried Bob. "Say, I believe you are more of a 'Jonah' than anything else! You will get us into trouble trying to look after you, I'm afraid. You must keep your wits about you."

"I—I—wuz—wuz skeered!" stammered Jim.

"Well, you looked it, that's a fact," drily. "Hurry along, now, or the redcoats will catch us!"

Bob held to Jim's arm and half pulled him along through the timber. The horse kept close behind the youths and managed to get along quite rapidly. The farther the youths went, and the less danger there seemed to be of capture by the British, the calmer Jim grew, and presently he was himself again.

"Ef ye think et best, I'll lead ye ter my home," he said. "Whut d'ye think—will the redcoats be able ter foller us?"

"Perhaps it would be as well to go a round-about way," replied Dick; "we don't wish to lead the redcoats to your home; they might burn the house and do a lot of damage."

"All right," said Jim; "we'll go 'way past ther house

and then make er surkit an' come back ter et frum ther other direckshun."

"That will be best and safest."

So they continued onward in the way they were going for a mile at least and then they turned to the right, and, making a half circuit, came back nearly half a mile and reached Jim's home, approaching from the rear.

"Et's purty nigh supper-time," said Jim, "so ye fellers might ez well put yer hosses in ther stable an' stay heer an' take supper with us. We kin talk ther matter uv me goin' with ye over ez we air eatin'."

"That is not a bad idea," said Dick. "What do you think, Bob?"

"It strikes me favorably; I'm hungry enough, I tell you!"

The horses were led into the stable and unsaddled and unbridled, after which they were given corn and hay, and then the three went to the house, being greeted on the way by four or five yellow dogs, which came rushing forth from under the house, barking for all they were worth. Jim gave one a kick and scolded the rest, however, and they slunk back under the house and subsided.

"The redcoats air lierble ter heer them air blamed dorgs a-barkin'," said Jim, in a tone of disgust, and his companions thought that there was danger, for the curs certainly had made noise sufficient to be heard for half a mile in every direction.

The three were soon in the house, and when the two "Liberty Boys" saw the children of all ages and sizes that were in the big, living-room, they stared in amazement, and then looked at each other as much as to ask, "What have we struck now?"

Jim quickly told his father and mother who Dick and Bob were, and what they had done for him, and the two were made welcome in the homely and hearty fashion of these simple backwoods people.

"Ye air welcum," said Mr. Slocum; "ye saved Jim's life, an' we air glad ter hev er chance ter thank ye."

"An' ther redcoats wuz erbout ter hang ye, Jim?" remarked his mother.

"Yes, ma," was the reply; "they'd a-finished me purty quick ef Dick an' Bob hedn't come erlong an' skeered 'em erway."

"Waal, waal! thet wuz a narrer escape, wuzn't et?"

"Yes, et wuz thet!"

"An' ye say ther redcoats killed our red cow, Jim?" asked his father.

"Yes, dad; ole Sukey's dead."

"Ther blame skoun'rels!" growled Mr. Slocum. "Thet



wuz er mighty mean trick, an' I don' see how we air goin' ter git erlong without ole Sukey."

"We'll hev ter git erlong without her, dad."

"Yes, thet's so; waal, I wush't ye hed killed some uv ther redcoats!"

"I'm ergoin' ter kill er lot uv 'em, dad, ef ye'll let me do whut I want'er!" exclaimed Jim, eagerly. This was a good chance to ask permission to join the "Liberty Boys."

"Whut d'ye want'er do, Jim?"

"I want'er jine ther comp'ny uv 'Liberty Boys,' dad."

"Oh, thet's ther comp'ny these young fellers berlongs ter, hain't et?"

"Yes, dad."

"Whur is ther comp'ny now?"

"Up ter Richmond."

"An' ye wants ter jine et, do ye?"

"Yes."

Mr. Slocum looked inquiringly at his wife, while the children looked eagerly at their parents to see what they were going to do about the matter, alternating by looking admiringly at the two handsome young strangers.

"Whut d'ye say, ole woman?" asked Mr. Slocum. "Shell we let Jim jine ther 'Liberty Boys'?"

Dick and Bob listened for Mrs. Slocum to speak, with considerable interest. They understood that what she said would practically settle the affair, and from what they had already seen of Jim they would just as leave not have him join the company as to have him. They saw that he was not very brave, and was easily rattled, and they more than half suspected that if he did join them he would cause them more trouble than he would do good. Still, they had told him he might join, if his parents were willing, and they would keep their word. They rather hoped Mrs. Slocum would refuse to let Jim join, but this hope was dashed to the ground.

"Ye say ther redcoats killed ole Sukey, Jim?" she remarked after a few moments.

"Yes, ma."

"You are sure they done et?"

"Uv course; nobuddy else would a-done et."

"An' they wuz goin' ter hang ye?"

"Yes; they'd a-done et, too, ef et hedn't be'n fur Dick an' Bob comin' erlong an' skeerin' 'em erway."

"An' ye wants ter go an' fight ther redcoats an' git revenge fur them killin' Sukey, an' tryin' ter hang ye?"

"Yes, ma, I do."

The woman hesitated and glanced around at the children. "Waal," she said presently, "thar's Bill an' Joe a-gittin' ter be good, big boys, an' so ef ye sh'd git killed an' never

come back, they c'u'd take yer place an' do yer work, so I guess I'll let ye go."

A sober look came over Jim's face. "D'ye think thar's enny danger uv me gittin' killed?" he asked Dick.

"Well, there is some danger of it," was the grave reply; "but, for that matter, as you have recently seen for yourself, there is danger of your getting killed even if you remain at home."

Jim looked thoughtful, was silent a few moments, and then, nodding his head, said: "Thet's so; I guess I'd be in erbout ez much danger heer ez with ye fellers. Waal, I'll jine yer comp'ny, ennyhow, an' ye bet I'm going ter kill some redcoats ef I kin!"

"We'll try and give you the opportunity, Jim," said Dick.

"Yes; and if you don't kill some redcoats, it will be your own fault," said Bob.

"Oh, I'll kill 'em!" declared Jim, with an assumption of bravery. "Say, dad, kin I hev ther ole rifle an' thet hoss pistil?"

Mr. Slocum looked undecided. "I hate to giv' 'em up Jim," he said; "ye know, we depen' er good deal fur whu we hev ter eat on me killin' wil' game, an' ther rifle is needed heer ter hum; but ye kin hev ther pistil."

"We can furnish you with musket and pistols, Jim," said Dick; "you won't need your father's weapons."

"All right; thet will be fine," said Jim.

Mrs. Slocum and two of the girls now busied themselves getting the evening meal, and Dick and Bob conversed with Mr. Slocum and Jim, while the rest of the children crowded around and listened to the conversation and eyed the two youths admiringly.

At last supper was ready and Dick and Bob and the elder members of the company sat up to the table and ate after which the others took their turn. When they had finished Dick said: "I think I will go out and take a look around; it is possible that the redcoats may come herea seeing that the fellows who came so near to hanging Jim are along with the crowd."

"I'll go along with you," said Bob; "or, rather, I will go in one direction and look for the redcoats while you go in another."

"I'll go, too," said Jim; "I'm er 'Liberty Boy' now, an' I'm goin' ter do all I kin erg'inst ther redcoats."

Dick did not think it likely that Jim could do much to aid them, but he made no objections to the youth going out on the scouting expedition, so the three left the house and after a brief conference, separated; Dick going one way, Bob another, and Jim still another.



Before Dick and Bob had gone fifty yards they heard a series of wild yells, which they knew proceeded from the throat of their new recruit, Jim. "Help! Murder! Redcoats!" roared the youth, and it was evident that he was in deadly terror.

"Well, what's the matter with Jim, now, I wonder?" thought Dick. "Can it be possible that he has encountered the redcoats, sure enough? I'll go and see!" and he hastened in the direction from which the yelling came.

Bob was impressed the same way, and he, too, hastened in the direction from which the yelling proceeded. He and Dick both reached Jim at the same moment, and found him sitting down, rubbing his leg and mumbling to himself. It was now dark, but not so dark but that they could see the youth fairly well.

"What is the matter, Jim?" asked Dick. "What were you yelling about?"

"And where are the redcoats?" asked Bob.

"I dunno," replied Jim. "I—I—thort they hed me!"

"But they didn't. What was the trouble, anyway?"

"Blamed ef I know."

"Well, surely you know what caused you to yell out in that fashion?"

"Yes, I know thet."

"Well, what was it?"

"W'y, I wuz walkin' erlong, kinder lookin' fur ther redcoats, an' thinkin' erbout 'em, an' all uv er sudden sumthin' grabbed me by ther leg! Thet wuz whut made me kick an' yell. Ye see, I thort ther redcoats hed me, shore."

"I wonder what it could have been?" remarked Dick. Then he began feeling around and looking carefully, with his face close to the ground. Suddenly an exclamation of satisfaction escaped his lips.

"I've found out what it was, Jim," he said. "Here are some trailing vines, and you probably got your foot tangled here as you went along, and when you couldn't pull your foot free you thought some one had seized hold of your leg."

Bob laughed. "Oh, Jim!" he exclaimed; "to mistake some vines for the redcoats!"

"Hum!" said Jim. "Is thet whut et wuz, shore enuff, Dick?"

"Come and see for yourself, Jim."

The youth stepped to Dick's side, and, stooping down, felt around. "I guess yer right, Dick," he admitted. "Et wuz ther vines ez done et, shore enuff."

"That and nothing more, Jim."

"Waal, I'm mighty glad thet et wuzn't ther redcoats!"

"Oh, yes, so are we; but I'm afraid that your yelling

will have been heard by the British, and that they will come over this way to see what caused it."

"D'ye think theer is danger uv thet, Dick?"

"Yes, I do."

"Say, I hope thet et won't turn out thet way!"

"So do I."

"Sh!" suddenly cautioned Bob, "I hear footsteps!"

"And voices!" said Dick, in a low, cautious voice. "They heard your yells, and are coming, as I feared they would do!"

"That's right," said Bob. "Jim, you are a regular 'Jonah'! I am afraid that you will 'queer' everything if you are not more careful and self-contained."

"Whut'll we do?" gasped Jim, in a trembling whisper.

"Well, for one thing, we must get away from here; they are coming straight this way!"

"Yes, the footsteps and voices are much closer than they were," said Bob.

"Let's go back ter ther house!" said Jim.

"No, they would find us there; we must keep away from the house and remain hidden in the timber till the redcoats have gone. It is lucky we are not at the house," said Bob.

"Let's be moving," said Dick.

The three moved away as silently as possible, through the timber. They had gone two or three hundred yards, in a semi-circle, when they heard voices yelling, followed immediately by the loud barking of dogs.

"They have found the clearing, and discovered the house!" said Dick.

"You are right!" from Bob.

"Say, d'ye s'pose they'll kill all ther folks?" asked Jim, in trembling accents.

## CHAPTER V.

### A NARROW ESCAPE.

"I hardly think there is any danger of their doing so," was Dick's reply.

"Why should they do anything of the kind?" asked Bob.

"On my 'count."

"On your account?"

"Yes."

"But they won't know that you are in any way connected with the family, will they?"

"Yes; them five fellers ez wuz erbout ter hang me is



erlong, ye know, an' they know my name an' how meniny theer is in our fambly, an' they'll be mad at my folks on my 'count."

"Perhaps not," said Dick; "they wouldn't be mean enough to do the rest of your folks injury on your account, surely. They will probably ask where you are, and may even look through the house, but I think that will end the matter."

"I hope so, but I'm erfraid not."

"Well, we'll stay close enough to the house so that we can hear and see what is going on; and if they go to doing any serious meanness we will take a hand and try to put a stop to it."

"But theer's more'n er duzzen uv 'em!" gasped Jim.

"Yes, there must be twenty, I should say."

"Thet's right; an' whut c'u'd we do erg'inst so menny?"

"Well, we might not be able to whip twenty, but we could make it very unpleasant for them."

"How?"

"By staying back in the edge of the timber and keeping up a constant firing at them."

"But they'd chase us, wouldn't they?"

"Perhaps so; but they couldn't catch us in the timber and darkness."

"Mebby not." This thought seemed to give Jim some satisfaction, for he drew a sigh of relief.

As Dick and Bob had thought it would do, Jim's yelling when he got his foot fast in the vine had attracted the attention of the redcoats. They had been a mile and a half away, on the track of the fugitives, but had finally decided that they could not catch them and had turned back, and were about a third of a mile away from Jim when he had the mishap. When they heard his yells they paused and listened.

"What is that?" exclaimed one.

"Somebody yelling," replied another.

"You are right; and he is yelling with all his might, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Maybe it is our game."

"It might be; let's go over that way and see what the trouble is, anyway."

"All right; forward, all!"

The redcoats hastened through the timber in the direction from which the yells had proceeded—they had now stopped.

They kept a sharp lookout as they advanced, but saw nothing of any one, and neither did they hear any more yells, so they had only the remembrance of the direction

from which the sound had seemed to come to guide them. Presently they paused. "Seems to me we should have run onto the fellow who was doing that yelling, by this time," said one.

"That's right," from another; "he must have moved after he got through with his vocal exercises."

"Must have been moved, you mean," said another; "if he was as bad off as his yells would indicate, I don't think he would have been able to move himself."

"That's true, too," said another. "Well, what shall we do? We have lost the three rebels, and have been unable to find the fellow who yelled. What is next on the programme?"

"Let's go on a bit farther," said still another; "we may find some one or something of interest. I'm curious to know what that yelling was about."

"I'm willing to investigate farther," said another.

The rest signified their willingness to advance still farther, so they set out and advanced slowly, keeping a sharp lookout on all sides. Presently they emerged from the timber into a clearing.

"Well, well!" cried one. "Here is something interesting. Here is a clearing and a house. Perhaps we shall find our quarry here!"

"Surround the house!" ordered the leader of the party. "Then if they are in the building we will have them."

This was quickly done, and then the leader advanced and rapped on the door.

Presently it was opened and a tall, gaunt man stood revealed. He gave a start when he saw the redcoats, but said nothing. He was pretty shrewd, and thought it would be as well to let the men make the first talk.

"Good evening!" said the leader of the redcoats.

"Ev'nin'!" was the reply.

"Is your name Slocum?" The leader of the party was the same man who had first accosted Jim over on the main road, when he was "dad-binging" the redcoats for killing the cow. He remembered that Jim had said his home was about half a mile away, and he guessed that this must be it.

"Yas, thet's my name," was the reply.

"I thought so; have you a son named Jim?"

"Yas, I hev er son by thet name."

"Where is he?"

Mr. Slocum was possessed of considerable native shrewdness, and he made up his mind that the redcoats should learn nothing from him.

"I dunno," was his reply.

"You don't know?"



"No, sir."

"He isn't at home, then?"

"No, he hain't heer."

"Where was he the last time you saw him?"

"He wuz goin' erway."

"In what direction?"

"Toward ther main road."

"When was this?"

"Erbout two hours ergo."

"Where was he going?"

"He wuz goin' in s'arch uv our ole cow, Sukey."

"Humph! And he hasn't come back yet?"

"No; leastwise I hain't seed 'im."

"Humph!" the redcoat grunted; he was not very well satisfied with the result of his inquiries. "You are sure you are telling the truth?" he asked.

"Sart'inly; I'm shore uv et. W'y air ye axin' me these heer questions, ennyhow? Whut does et mean? Hez Jim be'n a-doin' ennythin 'thet he ortenter?"

"Oh, no; and for that reason we would like to see him. If he is here you had better tell us so and have him come out."

"But he hain't heer; I've already tole ye thet. Ef he wuz I would hev sent 'im out ter wunst."

"You talk straight enough, Mr. Slocum," said the redcoat, "but as we are very anxious to see Jim, I guess we shall have to come in and search the house."

"S'arch ther house!"

"Yes."

"Whut d'ye expeck ter fin'?"

"I don't know; I wish to simply make sure that Jim either is or isn't here."

"I've tole ye he hain't heer."

"I know, but in these times we can't always take a man's word for a thing."

"Waal, thet's so, too, I expeck. Come in, ef ye wantter. Ye kin soon satersfy yersef thet thar hain't no lie erbout whut I hev tole ye."

The redcoat turned to his companions and named three. "Come along with me," he said; "we will go in and search the house."

They entered and searched the house thoroughly, but, of course, found no signs to indicate the presence of Jim.

"I s'pose yer satersfied now?" asked Mr. Slocum as they were leaving the house.

"Yes, we are satisfied that he isn't in the house at the present moment," was the reply; "but I believe he has been here lately."

"No, yer wrong, mister."

"Maybe we are; but there is one thing I should like to know about."

"Whut is thet?"

"We heard some one out in the timber yelling at a terrible rate a little while ago. Who could it have been?"

"Ye heerd sumbuddy yellin'?"

"Yes."

Mr. Slocum looked somewhat startled. "When wuz et?" he asked.

"Just a few minutes before we came to the house."

The man shook his head. "I kain't think whut et c'u'd hev be'n," he said. "I wuz in ther house an' didn' heer et."

"Well, we can't explain the matter, and as we can't find anything of your son, we may as well be going."

"Before ye go," said Mr. Slocum, "I'd like ter ax ye whut ye want with my boy?"

"Oh, we just wanted to have a little talk with him, that is all."

"How did ye cum ter know 'im?"

"Oh, I saw him—met him on the road and got acquainted with him—and he told me who he was and where he lived. By the way, you haven't seen anything of a couple of strangers, have you?"

Mr. Slocum shook his head. "No, I hain't seen no-buddy," he replied.

"Well, we will be going; sorry to have bothered you, Mr. Slocum."

"Oh, thet's all right; ye hain't bothered me none."

The redcoats walked away and the man re-entered the house and closed the door. His wife was pale, and there was a frightened look on her face.

"Thet wuz er narrer escape," she said; "whut ef Jim an' them two young men hed be'n in ther house?"

"W'y, they'd a-be'n captered, I guess," was the reply.

"Waal, I'm orfully glad they got erway afore the redcoats got heer!"

"Yas, so'm I."

When the redcoats reached the edge of the timber they paused and held a conference.

"I guess we'll have to give up trying to find that young rebel and his friends," said the leader. "What do the rest of you think?"

"It looks that way," said one.

"But don't you think they will come to the house?" asked another.

"Well, that is likely," was the reply; "but when will they come?"

"That is hard to say; but they may come at any moment."



"That's a fact; well, what do you advise?"

"That five or six of us stay here in hiding and watch for their coming."

"That's a good scheme!" exclaimed one. "Then, when they come, we can nab them."

"Well, I don't know whether five or six of us could do that or not," said one. "Those two fellows may be fighters."

"Bah! it's a pity if six of us couldn't handle three; and then, we will take them by surprise, you know."

Little did the speaker dream that the very individuals whom they were planning to surprise and capture were within hearing at that moment, taking it all in.

"That's so," the redcoat leader replied; "six will be plenty. Remain till morning, if they don't come sooner; and if they haven't come by that time they probably won't."

"That's about the way I figure it," from another.

Then the leader named six men who were to remain, and after giving them a few instructions he, with the rest, took his departure.

Dick whispered to Bob and Jim, and the three drew back to a safe distance and discussed the situation. They hardly knew what to do. It would, of course, be unsafe to return to the house.

"Your folks will know why we stay away, though, and that is one consolation," said Dick.

"Yes, they won't be lookin' fur us ter cum back," agreed Jim.

"Then, to my way of thinking, we had better get away from this part of the country as quickly as possible."

"Yes, that's about the way I look at it," said Bob.

"Have you a horse that you can take, Jim?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I've got er hoss uv my own."

"That is good! Is he in the stable?"

"Yes."

"Well, that simplifies matters. We will wait till the redcoats have gone away from the vicinity of the stable and then we will slip our horses out and get away from here in a hurry."

"Will ye cum back down heer erg'in, d'ye think?" asked Jim somewhat anxiously.

"It is likely we will do so at an early day, Jim. Why?"

"Waal, I'll tell ye: Molly Cone is—is—my gal, ye know, an'—an'—ef I wuz ter go—go erway an' not tell 'er I wuz goin', er whur I wuz goin', an' didn' come back fur er long time, she might—might not like me enny more, ye know, an'—"

"Oh, I understand!" said Dick, while Bob had hard work repressing a snicker. "Well, that will be all right, Jim. We will be back here within a week, at any rate,

and Molly will not blame you when she learns that you went for your good—that possibly you might have lost your life had you remained."

"Thet's so; I guess et'll be all right."

"Of course it will," said Bob; "some of your folks will see Molly, without doubt, and tell her what the trouble is."

"Thet's so; sister Sal 'll go over ter-morrer an' tell her all erbout et, I expek."

"Certainly she will," said Dick. "Well, come, boys, let's slip back to the stable and get our horses at the earliest possible moment."

They moved slowly and cautiously forward, and were soon close to the stable. Dick made his way along the side of the building, being careful to keep in the deep shadow, and presently was at the corner. He watched and listened, and soon discovered that the six redcoats had taken up their position where they could keep watch on both the front and rear of the house. This left the stable unwatched, and he returned to where his companions were and told them that he thought it safe to attempt to secure their horses. They made their way to the stable, opened the door—which was, luckily, around at the side—entered, and bridling and saddling their horses led them out and away without having been discovered.

They walked and led the horses till they reached the main road, and then, mounting, they rode northward in the direction of Richmond.

## CHAPTER VI.

### UNDER ORDERS FROM LAFAYETTE.

Two hours' riding brought the three youths to the James River. They crossed and entered the city. They rode onward until they came to a large, old-fashioned building standing well out toward the west side of the city, and here they paused.

"This is where the 'Liberty Boys' are quartered," said Dick.

They dismounted, and, leading their horses around to the rear of the building, were soon at the stable. Here they turned the animals over to a man who was in charge and returning to the house they entered. Sounds of laughter and voices came from a room toward the front and the three made their way along a long hall and entered a large sitting-room.

The room was filled with youths of about the age of Dick and Bob, and at sight of the two a shout went up.



"Hello, Dick and Bob!"

"So you're back again?"

"Where have you been, anyway?"

"Did you see any redcoats?"

"Who's that with you?"

Such were a few of the greetings and exclamations; it was evident that Dick and Bob were prime favorites with the rest.

"We've been down south a ways," replied Dick.

"How far south?" asked one.

"Oh, about fifteen miles."

"Were you anywhere near Petersburg?"

"We were within about five miles of there."

"See any redcoats?"

"Yes, a few."

"Jove!" was the exclamation, "I wish I had been with you!"

"And I! And I!" were the cries that went up.

"We wish so, too," said Dick. "Had you boys been there we would not have had to slip away and come back."

"How is that? Tell us about it!" was the cry.

"I will do so," said Dick; "but first let me introduce to you Mr. James Slocum, who is a new recruit."

The youths greeted Jim in their own peculiar fashion. They were young and full of life, and many were the ways in which they acknowledged the introduction.

"Hello, Jim!"

"Glad to know you!"

"Going to be a 'Liberty Boy,' eh?"

"How are you, James?"

"Think you would like to fight the redcoats, eh?"

Such were a few of the expressions used, and Jim ducked his head and mumbled out that he hoped he would get to fight the redcoats, and that he thought he would like to be a "Liberty Boy."

Then Dick went ahead and told the experiences of himself and two companions, with the redcoats, to all of which the youths listened with interest.

"Jove! let's go back down there and give the redcoats a lesson, Dick!" said Mark Morrison, a handsome youth of about nineteen years.

"That is just what I thought of doing," was the reply.

"It will be fun for us!" said Sam Sanderson.

Just then the front door opened and a man stuck his head in and called out: "Is Dick Slater here?"

"Yes, I'm here. What is wanted?" Dick replied.

"General Lafayette wishes to see you at headquarters as soon as is convenient," was the reply.

"Very well; tell him I will be over in a few minutes."

"All right, sir."

This was one of General Lafayette's orderlies, and he took his departure at once.

"What do you suppose the general wants, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I don't know; but I'll go right over and see."

"That is the best way to find out, I guess."

Dick left the house and walked down the street to the next corner; then he crossed, and running up the steps of the corner house, knocked on the door. It was opened by the same man who had been over to the "Liberty Boys'" quarters.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Captain Slater?" he remarked.

"Well, come right along. The general said to show you in immediately you came."

Dick followed the orderly along the hall and was soon ushered into a room in which a handsome but boyish-looking man was seated at a table. This was General Lafayette, and he leaped up and extended his hand, which Dick grasped.

"Ah, Dick! I am glad to see you!" he exclaimed. "I did not know whether or not you had returned from your scouting trip, when I sent over, but I am glad that such was the case."

"We got back only a few minutes ago, sir," replied Dick.

"Ah, perhaps you have not yet had anything to eat?"

"Yes, we had our supper at the usual time. I am not at all hungry, and am ready for business."

"Very well; then I will tell you what it is that I wish you to do."

"I shall be glad to listen, sir."

"I wish to know if you will attempt some very difficult and dangerous work for me, Dick?"

"I am quite ready to attempt it, sir; though I cannot, of course, be sure that I will succeed."

"Of course not; but I know from what I have heard of you from General Washington that if you don't succeed, nobody could do so."

"I am afraid that the lucky successes which I have made while working under the orders of the commander-in-chief has given him too high an opinion of me," smiled Dick.

"I don't think so; well, the work which I wish you to undertake for me is the same kind of work you have done for him so often."

"Spying?"

"Yes; I wish you to go down to Petersburg and learn if possible the number of men that are with General Cornwallis, and what he intends trying to do. This informa-



tion, if you can secure it, will be of great aid to me, as I shall then know what to expect and what to do."

"I understand that; and I shall be only too glad to make the attempt to secure the information."

Again General Lafayette seized Dick's hand and wrung it, with gratitude and pleasure in his eyes.

"I was sure what your answer would be, Dick," he said, "but I thank you all the same for your prompt acquiescence. I know that if it is possible to secure the information you will do it."

"I will certainly do my best, sir."

"I am sure of that; and now, when will you start?"

"To-night; within the hour."

"And when do you think you will be back?"

"When I have secured the information you wish, or when, in my judgment, something comes up which makes it wise for me to come."

"I understand; and that may be——"

"A day or a week hence."

"Exactly; well, I leave it all in your hands. Go when and how you please, and do the work your own way."

"Very well, and thank you. If you have no objections, General Lafayette, I should like to take my company of 'Liberty Boys' along."

"Certainly; I have no objections, Dick. In fact, I do not consider that I should have any right to object. You came down here, at your own request, to render me what assistance you could, and I do not feel that I have the right to order you to do this or that, or to claim jurisdiction over your men."

"Well, as to that, I think different," said Dick. "I came down here at my own request, true; but when the commander-in-chief gave his consent to my coming he said that I should place myself under your command and obey you the same as if you were him. But if you are willing that I should take my men, I shall be glad to do so, as the redcoats have been committing some depredations, and may take it into their heads to burn patriot homes; and if I have my men handy, while doing my spy work, I may be able to strike a blow or two at the redcoats."

"Certainly; and I hope that you may succeed in dealing them a few blows."

After some further conversation Dick shook hands with General Lafayette, bade him good-by and took his departure.

"Well, what did General Lafayette want?" asked Bob, when Dick appeared in the room occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

"He wants me to go back down to Petersburg."

"He does?"

"Yes."

"What for?" Bob was interested, as were all the "Liberty Boys," and they listened to Dick, eagerly, as he said:

"He wishes me to go down there on a spying expedition."

"Oh-ho! that's it, eh?"

"Yes."

"And are you going?"

"Of course I am."

"Jove, Dick, I wish that we could all go!"

"So do I!"

"And I!"

"It's the same with me."

Dick looked around at the eager faces of the youths, and then said: "You boys will have your wish. I'm going to take you along."

"You are?"

"What's that?"

"Take us along with you?"

"Hurrah!"

"Say, that is good news!"

Such were a few of the exclamations. It was evident that the "Liberty Boys" were delighted at the thought of getting to go with Dick.

"When will we start, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Just as soon as we can get ready."

"That is good news, too! Well, it won't take us long to get ready."

"No, indeed!" said Sam Sanderson. "We are ready, now, all but saddling and bridling our horses."

"Well, get to work at that," said Dick; "as soon as the horses are ready we will start."

The youths hastened to the sheds where the horses were, and bridled and saddled the animals, and then, having looked to their weapons, mounted and rode away toward the south.

"I have a scheme, Bob," said Dick as they rode along, side by side.

"What is it, Dick?"

"We will go to Jim's home and capture the six redcoats who are on guard there waiting for Jim to come home."

"That will be a good scheme," agreed Bob.

"I think so."

"Say, that will be jes' fine!" said Jim, who was riding right behind the two and heard what they said. "I'd like et ef we c'u'd ketch them fellers. Et'd sarve 'em right."



"I think so," agreed Dick.

"And we'll catch them, too," said Bob, confidently.

"I hope so!" from Jim.

It was a pleasant night, quite dark, there being no moon, but it was clear and the stars gave sufficient light so that the youths could see the road. They had no difficulty, therefore, in keeping on in the right direction; and after two hours of moderate riding, were in the vicinity of Jim's home.

Jim pointed out the opening of a winding pathway which entered the timber at a point a mile north of his home. "Ef ye wanter go ther shortest way," he said, "we kin take thet path an' et'll bring us out right clust ter our stable."

"That's just the thing, Jim!" said Dick. "That is, if there isn't any danger of our getting lost by trying to go out through the timber."

"Huh! I c'u'd fin' my way erlong thet path blindfolded."

"All right, then; you take the lead and the rest of us will follow. I suppose we will have to go in single file."

"Waal, we'll hev ter ride wun a-hind ernuther, ef thet's whut ye mean."

"All right! go ahead, the rest of us will keep close behind you."

Jim took the lead and led the way along the narrow, winding path, the others coming behind him.

"We must be careful not to make any more noise than we can possibly help," said Dick.

"That's right," agreed Bob.

Dick cautioned the youths by sending the word back along the line, and the deepest silence was maintained, no one saying a word. The muffled chug-chug of the horses' hoofs being the only sound that could be heard.

They moved forward slowly, the horses being kept down to a walk, but it did not take long to reach the immediate vicinity of the home of Jim Slocum. They were within a hundred yards of the stable when suddenly something fluttered across the path in front of Jim's horse, frightening the animal and scaring Jim worse. The fact of the matter was that Jim, not being very brave, to begin with, was in a state of nervous suspense as they approached his home. He knew that there were six redcoats concealed there, and the thought came to him that if they should suddenly be come upon, he, being in the lead, would be the one who would suffer.

"I would be shot dead!" he said to himself. "Blamed if I like this heer ertall!"

As we have said, he was on a strain, and the fluttering of the object—which was, in reality, nothing more alarming

than a startled chicken—across the path was all that was needed to break Jim's nerve completely; and, giving vent to a startled yell, he leaped off his horse and went running away through the timber, shouting at the top of his voice: "Murder! Redcoats! Thieves! Help! We will be killed!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### JIM, THE "JONAH."

"The fool!" exclaimed Bob, in a disgusted voice. "He has queered the whole business!"

"Yes. I begin to think that you were right, Bob, when you said that he was a 'Jonah.' It begins to look as if that was the truth of the matter."

"The idea of him getting scared at an old hen fluttering across the path!" said Mark Morrison. "I should have thought that a farmer's boy like him would know better than to let an old hen scare him."

"He has certainly alarmed the redcoats," said Bob, in a disappointed tone.

"Undoubtedly," agreed Dick. "Well, jump down and go after him, Bob. We will wait here for you."

"All right!" Bob jumped to the ground and hastened through the timber in the direction taken by Jim. As he went he began calling out to the youth to stop.

"Stop! Hold on! Wait, Jim!" he cried. "It's me, Bob! Wait! Don't keep on running!"

Jim heard Bob, but at first would not stop. He was too badly frightened; but presently he came to his senses in a measure, and the exercise of running made him calmer. He understood what Bob said, and finally came to a stop. Bob was soon up with him.

"What in the world is the matter with you, Jim?" Bob asked with some asperity. "What are you yelling and running in this fashion for?"

"Tryin' ter git erway frum ther redcoats!" panted Jim.

"Great guns! that wasn't a redcoat, Jim!"

"Et wuzn't?"

"No."

"Whut wuz et, then?"

"A chicken."

"Er—chicken?"

"Yes; nothing more, nothing less. But even if it had been a redcoat, what could he have done against a hundred of us? Oh, for that matter, what could the six do against us?"



"N-not much, I—I guess."

"Of course not; and now you have given the alarm by your silly action and yelling, and the redcoats will get away. We won't get to capture them."

"T-thet's too bad; I—I'm sorry."

"I suppose you are, but that won't help matters any. The mischief is done."

"I—I c-c-u'dn't he'p et, Bob. I wuz off my hoss an' runnin' afore I knowed et. An' didn' know I wuz hol-lerin'."

"Well, everybody else within a mile of here knew it!" drily. "But, come; come back with me. It will do no good to stay here."

"All right."

The two made their way back to where their comrades were awaiting them, and, mounting their horses, they again rode forward.

"Don't get frightened if another chicken flutters across the path," said Bob, and Jim answered that he wouldn't, though it was easy to tell by the tone of his voice and its tremulousness and huskiness that he was badly frightened.

Nothing came up to give him another scare, however, and the stable was reached. Here all dismounted, and, tying their horses, stole toward the house.

They looked all around, but could find no traces of the redcoats.

"I didn't think we would," said Bob, grimly; "the yells Jim gave utterance to were enough to frighten them away."

"That's right," agreed Mark Morrison; "they would either frighten them away or scare them to death."

"It was the former," said Bob; "for we have found no dead bodies lying around."

While they were talking, the back door of the house opened and Mr. Slocum came forth. He was surprised and a bit startled when he saw so many people, but when he found it was Dick Slater and his company of "Liberty Boys," he was well pleased.

Dick explained that he and Bob and Jim had learned that some redcoats were to remain on watch over the house and that the three had taken their horses out of the stable and rode up to Richmond; and that now the entire company had come down, the six redcoats had taken refuge in flight.

"What wuz thet yellin' I heerd?" Mr. Slocum asked.

"I guess it came from the redcoats, who probably got frightened when they found we were coming in force," was Dick's quick reply. He didn't want to hurt the man's feelings by having him know that his son had acted in a cowardly manner.

"Thet wuz et, I expeck," Mr. Slocum replied. "Waa whut ye goin' ter do nex'?"

"We are going down in the vicinity of Petersburg."

"Oh!"

"General Lafayette wishes me to do some spying on the British."

"Thet's et, hey?"

"Yes, sir. Well, we can do no good staying here, so we will be moving. Come, boys. Good-night, Mr. Slocum."

"Good night, Mister Slater, an' all!" Then as an afterthought he asked: "How is Jim doin'—all right?"

Dick did not have the heart to tell the man the truth, so he answered evasively. "Oh, yes, he's doing as well as could be expected," he replied.

"Waal, make 'im toe ther mark, Mister Slater! Make 'im stan' up ter ther rack like er man an' take 'is medicine, be et good er bad."

"All right; I will do so."

The youths went back, untied their horses, mounted and rode slowly away, until they reached the main road, and then they rode at a faster pace. They kept a sharp lookout ahead and stopped and listened occasionally, but they did not hear or see anything of the six redcoats.

They continued on southward till they came to a stretch of very heavy timber. "Et's on'y erbout er mile ter ther crick," said Jim; "et's er branch uv ther James River, and Petersburg is jes' ercross onter ther other side."

"Then perhaps we had better halt," said Dick. "Do you suppose you could find a decent camping ground anywhere in this vicinity, Jim?"

"Yes, I know uv er nice campin' place."

"How far from here?"

"'Bout ha'f er mile."

"Off to one side of the road?"

"Yes."

"And you can find it without being in danger of getting lost?"

"Oh, yes."

"Very well; take the lead and show us the way to the camping ground."

Jim obeyed, and led the way, all following. It was slow work, but Jim was a good woodsman and did not lose his way; and fifteen minutes later reached a glade on the bank of a stream. The glade was of perhaps two acres extent and was an ideal camping place.

"What stream is this, Jim?"

"This is ther branch uv ther James River."

"Oh, the same stream Petersburg is located on."

"Yes, ther same. Petersburg is erbout er mile down



"Then to reach the town all I will have to do will be to follow the creek?"

"Thet's right."

"Good! That is simple enough."

The youths went into camp, and although it was now midnight, Dick had serious thoughts of visiting the town and trying to find out the lay of the land. He decided not to do so, finally, however, and after stationing guards he and the other youths lay down and went to sleep.

They were up bright and early next morning and after breakfast Dick made his way down the stream till he was near the edge of Petersburg. He wished to enter the town, but did not know how to go about it. He was afraid to walk right in for fear some of the redcoats might recognize him. While he was debating the subject he heard the rattle of the wheels of a wagon. He was near the road, and looking up the road he saw a wagon approaching.

Dick did not hesitate; he thought he saw a chance to get into the town, and he went out and hailed the man. The farmer—for such he evidently was—brought his horses to a stop and looking at the youth inquiringly, said: "Who diair you?"

"You answer me one question, first," replied Dick, "and then I will answer yours."

"All right; I'll answer et ef I kin."

"What are you—Whig or Tory?"

The man started and gave the youth a searching look. "Don't ye think," he said, slowly, "ez how't I'd be kinder foolish ter say I wuz er Whig w'en I'm almos' in ther very camp uv ther redcoats?"

Dick smiled. "Perhaps you would," he replied; "but you have done so, just the same."

The man started and looked alarmed. "I hevn't done ennythin' uv ther kin'!" he protested. "I don' know whut ye mean. Ye mus' be crazy!"

"No, you have not said you were a patriot in so many words, but you have said something which makes me know that such is the case; but you need not be alarmed. I am a friend, not an enemy, and am glad to know that you are not a Tory."

"See heer, young feller," said the farmer earnestly, "you diair erbout ther smartest chap I ever seen; but ef I sed sumthin' thet made ye know I am er patriot, I'd like ter know whut et wuz, fur I might say ther same thing ter ther redcoats, an'——"

"That's it! That is what you said that made me know you are a patriot," interrupted Dick.

"Whut's whut I said?"

"Redcoats."

"Redcoats?"

"Yes; you speak of the British as 'redcoats.' Now, if you were a Tory you would not use the word 'redcoats' at all. Every time you spoke of them it would be 'the British.'"

The man studied a few moments. "I guess yer right," he admitted; "waal, yer right erbout me bein' er patriot, an' now, whut erbout et?"

"I'll tell you. I wish you to do me a favor."

"Whut?"

"I see you have a load of vegetables; I wish you to let me ride into the town with you and pretend to be your son, do you understand?"

"I unnerstan' thet part uv et, but I don' see why ye wants ter go inter ther town in thet fashion."

"Well, I have a good reason for it, you may be sure. Will you do it?"

"Uv course; I'm reddy ter do ennythin' ter he'p the cause erlong, an' I guess ez how ye air er patriot yerself."

"I am."

"I thort so; an' I expeck ye air er spy."

"I admit that my reason for wishing to enter the town of Petersburg is so that I may be enabled to look around a bit and see what the redcoats are doing."

"All right; jump up heer erlongside uv me."

Dick hastened to obey. "Now drive on," he said; "and don't forget that I am your son 'Tom.'"

"All right, Tom," with a grin.

The man eyed his companion closely as they rode along. "Ye don' live in these parts, do ye?" he asked, presently.

"No."

"I thort not."

"What made you think so?"

"Waal, I've lived in this neighborhood all my life, an' know nearly ever'buddy fur ten miles aroun', an' I never seen ye afore."

"You are right; you never saw me before, and I don't live in this part of the country."

"Ye tork like ye wuz from ther No'th."

"Do you think so?" with a smile.

"Yes; an' ef ye're goin' ter perten' ter be my son Tom ye hedn't better tork quite so good. Ye know whut I mean; er son uv mine'd tork more like me, don' ye think?"

"Yep, I think so, dad."

The man laughed. "Thet's er leetle bit better," he said, approvingly.

"Oh, they'll never suspek frum ther way I tork thet I hain't yer son."



"Not ef ye don' furgit, an' go ter torkin' yer high-falutin' tork."

"I won't furgit."

They crossed the stream and entered the town. It was quite early, and while the shops were open the British soldiers were only just eating breakfast. The farmer drove to a vacant square near the centre of the town and there stopped. It was evident that he had been here before, for he had not been there long before the soldiers came hastening toward him.

"Got some fresh vegetables this morning, old man?" asked one.

"Yas," was the reply, "I hev er lot uv fresh vegetables."

"All right; we'll soon take them off your hands," said another.

The redcoats crowded around the wagon and began a wild scramble for the contents. Every fellow grabbed what he could, and in a very few minutes the wagon was empty. Then each redcoat displayed what he had secured and paid for it and went his way, happy to think he would have something good to eat that day.

There was one exception, however. One redcoat, who had secured a head of cabbage, a bunch of beets and two bunches of onions, was sneaking away without going through the formality of paying for what he had secured. Dick had his eye on the fellow, however, and called the farmer's attention to it.

"Thar goes er man with er lot uv stuff he hain't paid fur, dad," he remarked, pointing toward the individual in question.

"Is thet so?" remarked the farmer, an angry look on his face; then he evidently thought it better not to try to do anything, so he said: "I guess we hed better let 'im go."

"I wouldn' do et," said Dick; "he's er thief, he is, an' et hain't fa'r ter ther res' uv ther men heer who air payin' fur their stuff, ter let 'im go away without payin' fur his'n."

"You are right about that, sonny," remarked one of the redcoats; "but that fellow is a bully and a dangerous man to anger, so it will be as well to let him go in peace."

"Ef ye say ther word, dad, I'll let 'im go in pieces instid uv in peace."

Several of the redcoats laughed. "You are all right, my boy," remarked one, "but that fellow would make short work of you."

"Would he?" the youth remarked. "Say, I s'pose he's er bully, an' dommineers over ther res' uv ye an' makes ye stan' aroun', an' all thet."

"That is what he does, my boy. That is to say, we don't dare cross him in any way."

"An' I s'pose ye wouldn' keer purtickler ef he wuz ter git er good lickin'?"

The men laughed. "No," said one, "we wouldn't care we would be delighted—but you couldn't give him the thrashing, so you had better let him go."

"I hain't ergoin' ter do ennythin' uv ther kin'. The feller with thet cabbidge is er thief, an' I'm ergoin' ter tell 'im so an' make 'im pay fur them vegertables er giv' 'em up!" Then he lifted up his voice and called out, loudly: "Hol' on, thar, ye feller with thet cabbidge an' them beets an' onions, ye hain't paid fur 'em yit!"

The redcoat paid no attention. He had now worked his way through the crowd till he was nearly at the edge, and was a hundred feet from the wagon. Dick saw the fellow was not going to pay any attention, so he decided to make things so interesting for him that he would stop.

"Stop, thief!" roared Dick. "Hol' on, thar, ye blamed raskal! Whut d'ye mean by grabbin' er lot uv stuff an' gittin' erway so lively with it in that fashion? Stop, I say! Stop, thief!"

The man looked around, and the instant he did so Dick pointed his finger directly at the fellow. "I mean you!" he said. "Come right back heer an' pay fur them thar vegetables er thar'll be trubble!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DICK SURPRISES THE REDCOATS.

The redcoat paused and stared back at the youth in the wagon, in a surprised fashion. Doubtless he did not know what to make of being addressed in such fashion. For a few moments he was silent, while his comrades looked from him to the youth in the wagon with breathless interest. Suddenly the redcoat found his voice and he cried out: "Do you mean to say that you are speaking to me, you young vagabond?" He was red with rage and his eyes glowed viciously.

"Yes, I'm speekin' ter you—an' I hain't no vagabon', eether, nur er thief, an' you air!"

"What's that! You dare to say I'm a thief?" The man fairly shouted this out he was so amazed and angry.

"I sartinly do dar' say ye're er thief! Nobuddy but er thief would grab er lot uv stuff thet don' belong ter 'im an' run erway with et!"

Something very like a curse escaped the lips of the red-



coat and he came striding back toward the wagon, his comrades making way before him and giving him a clear path. One and all thought that the youth in the wagon had done a very unwise thing. It was their belief that he was in for a terrible thrashing; and some even thought that if he escaped with his life he would do well. The owner of the vegetables was very much frightened. "I wish't ye hedn't sed ennythin', Tom," he murmured; "thet feller'll do ye hurt I'm erfeerd."

"Ye needn' be erfeerd, dad," was the reply. "I'll make 'im wish't he hedn't tried ter steal ther vegetables."

Of course, the farmer didn't know who Dick was or what he could do, but he knew he was only a young fellow, and did not think he would be a match for the redcoat, who, it was easy to see as he drew near, was a burly fellow, evidently stronger than the average of men.

The farmer looked wildly around, as if contemplating driving away as rapidly as possible, but the wagon was in the midst of the redcoats and it would have been impossible to get through. Dick divined the man's thoughts and laughingly said: "Now, don' ye be erfeerd, dad; this heer red-coated feller won't hurt me enny. Jes' ye set still an' watch, an' you'll see sumthin' thet'll make ye proud thet ye air my dad."

The redcoat, red-faced and red-uniformed, was almost to the wagon now, and Dick stood up and watched the fellow closely; he did not know but the man might attempt to use a pistol. He did not seem to have any such intention, however, for he made no move toward drawing a weapon. As he drew near Dick looked him straight in the eyes, smiling blandly the while.

"So ye decided ter bring ther vegertables back, hey?" he said coolly. "Waal, thet's right. Ye air wiser than I thort."

Something in Dick's tone and air angered the redcoat terribly, and he suddenly hurled the cabbage at the youth's head. Dick caught the cabbage in an expert manner and dropped it into the wagon-bed. "Thet's right; giv' up ther stuff," said the youth calmly, "but don't throw it quite so reckless-like. Hand et up ter me."

The majority of the redcoats stared in open-mouthed amazement, while a few laughed. "That young fellow is the coolest chap I have seen in many a long day," one remarked to his nearest neighbor.

"Yes; but it is the coolness born of ignorance."

"You think so?"

"Why, of course; he doesn't know that he is in danger, and any one can be cool under such circumstances."

The other was a close observer, however, and shook his

head in dissent. "I don't know about that," he said; "it strikes me that the young fellow knows what he is about."

"Bah! he won't know anything five minutes hence. He will be lucky if he escapes with his life!"

"Perhaps so, but I doubt it; and I certainly hope that such will not be the case. I would like to see Sherley get a good thrashing, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would; but that green country gawk will never be able to give it to him."

"Just wait a few minutes and see what happens."

Perhaps the most surprised man of all was Sherley himself. He had confidently expected to knock the insolent country youth out of the wagon with the cabbage, but had failed. For a few moments he stood staring up at the youth, and then he threw the beets, and next the onions, both bunches being caught dexterously and deposited in the bottom of the wagon.

"Thank ye," said Dick; "much obliged. Now you may go; and if any of the rest of ye want these heer vegertables, w'y jes' step up an'—oh, ye would, would ye?" this last to Sherley, who had suddenly stepped forward and made a grab at him, with the evident intention of jerking the supposed country youth out of the wagon. Dick had had his eye on the fellow, however, and saw what he was about to do, and reaching down he seized him by the wrist. Now, although to look at him, no one would have suspected the fact that Dick was a youth possessed of extraordinary strength. He had never yet met the man who was stronger in the arms, wrists or hands than himself, and he now exercised his strength to the extent that he pulled the redcoat close up to the wagon, and then giving him a sudden fling sent him reeling backward ten or a dozen feet. The fellow would have fallen had it not been for the fact that there were so many of his comrades standing around that he could not, they keeping him in an upright position.

To say that all were surprised is stating the case very mildly indeed. Had a clap of thunder come from a clear sky they would not have been more surprised, not to say startled. They stared at the calm-faced, smiling youth in wonder and amazement. What manner of fellow was he? they asked themselves. How had he been able to hurl their comrade back with such force?

Sherley was surprised, but he was even more angry. To be handled, to be thrown about in this fashion by a beardless youth, and a country gawk at that, was almost too much for him to have to endure, and he was wild to get revenge. He bounded forward, and, shaking his fist at the youth, cried: "Get down out of that wagon! Get down,



"I say, and meet me here on the ground, man to man, and I will let you off with a thrashing—though I'll half kill you—but if you don't get out of the wagon I shall put a bullet through you—do you hear?"

"Oh, yes, I heer, all right!" was the calm reply. "Ye wants me ter git down onter ther groun' an' giv' ye er lickin'."

"You give me a licking—pish! I could whip a dozen like you, with one hand tied behind me!"

"Ef thier duzzen hed both theer hands tied erhind 'em!" with a grin.

"Bah! Jump down, for I am not going to wait all day for you!"

"Oh, I don' ax ye ter wait. I'm comin'. Jes' look out fur me!"

Dick leaped to the ground, and, as he expected, he had scarcely alighted before the redcoat was at him with all the ferocity of a mad bull. He no doubt expected to beat the youth down easily, but he quickly found his mistake. There was not much room for manœuvring, there being such a crowd around, but Dick did not mind this; he felt that he was able to take care of himself under any circumstances, and as the redcoat rushed upon him he dealt the fellow a couple of terrible blows, full in the face. The blows were unexpected, and were so strong that the rush of the redcoat was brought to a sudden stop. He came up "all standing," as the sailor men say, and stood there blinking and half dazed. This was Dick's opportunity, and he improved it. Measuring the distance, he let drive with his right fist and dealt the redcoat a terrible blow full in the chest.

Crack! thud! Down went the man as if struck by a catapult, and he rolled and tumbled and kicked about, in a desperate effort to again catch his breath, the stroke having knocked it all out of him.

"Oh-h-h-h-h!" he groaned. "Oh-h-h-h-h!"

The sight was almost comical, though to the victim it was anything but funny, and some of the spectators grinned. Many stared at the youth in wonder.

Dick folded his arms and looked at the fallen man calmly. "I tole 'im he'd git 'imself inter trubble," he said calmly. "I reelly didn' wanter hurt 'im, but he would hev et, so he got et."

Perhaps the most astonished man in the crowd was the farmer, whose son Dick was supposed to be. He stared at the youth in open-mouthed amazement. Some of the redcoats noticed this, and one said: "You seem to be as surprised as any one, old man. I guess you didn't know your son was such a terrible fellow, did you?"

The farmer shook his head. "Yer right, I didn'," he admitted. "This heer is sumwhut uv er surprise ter me, ther same ez ter ther res' uv ye."

"Didn' I tell ye erwhile ago thet ye'd be proud uv yer son, dad?" the youth remarked, turning toward the farmer, with a grin.

"Yas, ye did, thet's er fack; but I didn' think ye could handle thet feller. He's bigger nur ye air."

"Yes, but he hain't no better man nur I am."

"Et do look thet way, shore."

"You had better keep close watch of him when he gets up," said one of the redcoats to Dick, in a low tone; "he will try to kill you, or I don't know him."

"I'll watch 'im, mister; an' thank ye fur ther warnin'."

The redcoat had now ceased tumbling and kicking about, and had risen to a sitting posture. His hands were on his stomach as if he felt somewhat sick, and his face was pale. There was a wicked look in his eyes, however, as he looked up at the youth who had given him such a terrible blow. It was evident that the fight had not yet all been taken out of him. He was eager to secure revenge, and was only waiting to regain his full wind and strength before renewing the fight.

"I suppose you think you have done something wonderful?" he snarled.

"Oh, no," Dick replied, carelessly; "I don' think et ennythin' very wonderful ter knock sech er feller ez ye 'aroun'."

"Oh, you don't, eh?" the tone was intended to be sarcastic, but much of the effect was missing.

"Sartinly I don'."

"I suppose, then, that you think almost any one could knock me around?"

"I think they could ef they'd try, and wuzn't skeered uv ye ter start with."

"Bah! You are a fool!"

"I fooled ye, all right."

A number of the redcoats laughed at this, and the sound of the laughter was like shaking a red rag in a bull's face. The redcoat leaped to his feet, with a curse, and sprang toward Dick, intent on seizing him. Doubtless he thought that if he could get hold of the youth he could handle him easily, for, while he had had one proof of the youth's strength, he did not think it possible that he was strong as himself.

Dick knew what the redcoat's idea was, as well as the fellow did himself, and he decided to meet him in his own way. Dick let the redcoat get hold of him, but by a dexterous movement he succeeded in getting a peculiar hold of his own, and with a sudden exertion of his wonderful



strength he lifted the man clear of the ground and threw him high in the air. The redcoat turned almost a somersault in the air and came down upon his head and shoulders in the wagon-box, the crash seeming to be almost sufficient to knock the bottom out.

Cries of wonder and amazement escaped the lips of the spectators.

"Wonderful!"

"Amazing!"

"I never saw anything like it!"

"Sherley caught a Tartar that time!"

"He certainly did!"

"Jove! I wonder if the fall killed him?"

"No, he hain't dead," replied Dick, who had climbed into the wagon and bent over the prostrate form of the redcoat, "but he's insenserable, an' I expeck thet ye fellers hed better kerry 'im ter his hum an' do sumthin' fur 'im. He did come down purty hard, fur er fack."

"I should say he did!" agreed one of the men. "Well, he brought it on himself."

"Yes, thet's right; I don' feel ez ef I'm ter blame in ther matter."

"Certainly you were not."

A number of the redcoats lifted the unconscious man out and carried him away, and then the farmer hastened to drive away.

"Thar's no tellin' whut them fellers might make up their min's ter do ef et sh'd happen thet ther feller dies," he said.

"You are right," agreed Dick; "they might want to put a rope around the neck of a fellow about my size."

"Kerrect; an' so I think we hed better git outer town ez quick ez we kin."

"I judge that it would be safest; though I don't think the redcoat is seriously injured."

"Mebby not; but we'll git fur hum, ennyhow."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE "LIBERTY BOYS" TO THE RESCUE.

The farmer drove out of the town as fast as he thought it wise to go, and just before he reached the stream, they passed a large, stone building, with strong, barred windows in the second story. Just as they were opposite this building there came a cry; and looking up they saw the face of some person at one of the barred windows. "Help!" cried

the person. "I am a prisoner here! Oh, won't you rescue me?"

"It's a woman!" exclaimed Dick, and he made a move as if to leap out of the wagon, but at the same instant some one jerked the prisoner away from the window and slammed it shut.

Dick settled himself back into the seat. "It would do no good for me to try to do anything to-day, in broad daylight," he said; "I must wait till some other time."

"You'll get killed ef ye come foolin' aroun' heer, tryin' ter resky ennybuddy," said the old farmer.

"Perhaps so; perhaps not. I'm going to risk it and make an attempt to rescue the woman to-night. She looked to be a young woman, don't you think?"

"Yes; an' her voice sounded like thet uv er gal."

"So it did; have you heard of any young woman or girl being missing anywhere in the vicinity lately?"

The man shook his head. "No, kain't say's I hev," he said slowly; "but hol' on—yes, I hev, too! I heerd on'y las' night thet Si Perkins' gal, Kate, wuz missin' frum hum. She went over ter a nabor's an' spent ther day, an' started hum jes' erbout dark, but didn' git thar."

"And that was last night, you say?"

"Et happened night afore las'. I jes' heerd uv et las' night."

"I understand. And they have heard nothing of the girl since her disappearance?"

"They hedn't up ter las' night at supper-time, when er nabor tole me erbout et."

"Then it is possible the girl who is held prisoner back yonder is this Kate Perkins you speak of."

"Yes, et's posserble."

"If such is the case she must be rescued at all hazards."

"Waal, et'll be sumwhut hazzardess ter resky 'er frum right outer ther redcoat camp, I sh'd think."

When they were at the point where Dick had joined the farmer as he was going to the town, the youth alighted; and after thanking the man, bade him good-by and plunged into the timber and made his way in the direction of the camp.

"Where have you been, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook. "Into Petersburg."

"What! Into the redcoat encampment?"

"Yes."

"How did you manage it?"

"Weren't you afraid you would be recognized?"

"Say, you are risky!"

"You will get captured yet!"



Such were a few of the exclamations, to all of which Dick listened with a smile.

"You see, I didn't get captured," he said; "I'm back, all safe and sound."

"Yes; but it is a wonder."

"What did you find out, anyway, Dick?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"Well, I was enabled to form an estimate regarding the number of troops Cornwallis has, for one thing."

"And what else?"

"Oh, I saw the lay of the town, and a few things like that that may prove to be of value."

"I don't think so, for Lafayette isn't going to come down and attack Cornwallis in Petersburg."

"And I discovered that a girl is held prisoner in one of the houses in the town."

"A girl?"

"Yes."

"How do you know this?"

"She showed herself at a window and called for help."

"Is that so? Goodness! that is bad!"

"So it is; but we will rescue her to-night, if such a thing is possible."

"I'm with you for making the attempt, Dick!"

Bob was a brave, chivalrous youth, and always ready to risk his life where the safety of a girl or woman was concerned.

Dick looked around. "Where is Jim?" he asked.

"You mean Slocum?"

"Yes."

"I don't know; he left camp half an hour ago and hasn't come back."

"I wish he would hurry and return; I want to ask him a few questions."

At this instant there came the sound of crackling underbrush, and an occasional wild yell, and a few moments later Jim Slocum burst into the clearing, bareheaded, his hair flying, his coat-tail sticking almost straight out behind.

"Help!" he yelled. "Help! Redcoats! Look out! they're coming!"

The youths leaped to their weapons and stood ready to fire the instant the enemy appeared, but they waited in vain. Nobody came in sight. For all that could be seen or heard to indicate otherwise, Jim had been racing all alone, with no one after him. He asserted strenuously that he had been pursued, however. "Theer wuz four uv 'em," he panted; "four redcoats, an' they giv' me er terrible scare an' chase. They mus' hev stopped w'en they seen thet thar wuz er big crowd uv ye heer."

"Quite likely your are right, Jim," said Dick; "come, some of you, let's see if we can get sight of the fellows."

Fifteen or twenty of the youths went with Dick, and they beat up the timber for a quarter of a mile around, but saw no signs of the redcoats. When they returned to the encampment Dick asked Jim where he had been and how he happened to get the redcoats after him.

"I went over to the main road," replied Jim, "and was down close to the creek, trying to get a look at the town, when all of er sudden ther redcoats come runnin' outer ther timber and took arter me. I run with all my might, an' kep' jes' erbout ther same distance in front uv 'em all ther time. I made straight fur camp, an' they follered me till I wuz a-mos' heer."

"I'm sorry you were seen and chased by them," said Dick; "they have discovered our presence here and now we will have to move, for they will likely bring a party and attack us if we don't."

"Thet's right, I expeck. I'm mighty sorry, but I couldn't he'p et. I wuz erfeerd they'd capter me an' hang me, an' so I made fur camp."

"What a fellow he is!" said Bob Estabrook to Dick later on as they were getting ready to break camp. "He's a regular 'Jonah,' and no mistake."

"Yes, he has 'queered' everything we have attempted to do so far."

"He means well, I think."

"Oh, yes, no doubt of that."

"He is just unlucky, that's all."

"Yes; a sort of 'Jonah,' as you have said."

When they were ready to start Dick asked Jim if he knew of another good camping place anywhere near. He studied a while, and said that he thought he could lead the party to another camping place that would be just as satisfactory as this one had been. So Dick told him to take the lead, which he did, and the party set out.

Jim was as good as his word. He led them to another good camping place, which was at about the same distance from Petersburg, and as soon as Dick had sized up affairs, and had satisfied himself that the place was satisfactory, the youths again went into camp.

"Now, don't leave camp without first getting permission from me, Jim," said Dick somewhat severely; "remember, you are a member of my company now, and are under military rules. I am in full command, and none of the boys ever think of doing anything without first asking my permission. Remember that."

"All right, Dick—I mean captain!" said Jim, looking somewhat crestfallen.



"I had to say something to him to keep him in the camp," said Dick to Bob; "he was liable to wander off and get some more redcoats after him, and then he would, of course, lead them here."

"He would do that very thing. He would make straight for the camp."

"I'll have to be somewhat strict with him."

"So you will; perhaps if you are he will get disgusted with the life of a soldier and want to go home—which would be the best thing for himself and for us, too."

"I judge that you are right."

Dick placed men on guard so as to avoid being taken by surprise, but no redcoats put in an appearance that day. Doubtless they had gone to the point where the "Liberty Boys" had first been encamped, had found them missing and made up their minds that the youths had gone clear away. It would be the thing most parties would have done. The very boldness of their move in remaining close at hand was its best feature, and their safeguard.

As soon as it was dark that evening, Dick began making up a party to go across the river into the edge of the town and make an attempt to rescue the girl who was held prisoner in the house.

He decided to take six of the youths, as it would not do to take too many; a large party would be sure to attract attention, where six or seven might not.

"Lemme go with ye, Dick?" said Jim Slocum.

Dick hesitated. "I am afraid that you might not do just what I want done, Jim," the youth said.

"Oh, yes, I will!" eagerly. "Ye needn' be afeerd. I'll do jes' whutever ye tell me."

Dick was a little bit doubtful about the matter, but Jim pleaded so hard to be taken along that he finally gave in and said: "All right; you may go along. But you will have to keep quiet and be very careful, Jim."

"Oh, I will!"

Having selected the youths who were to go with him, Dick gave the others some instructions, and the little party set out. Jim acted as guide, and led them to a point on the stream where they were enabled to cross on some rocks without even getting their shoes wet. Then they made their way in the direction of Petersburg.

It was a walk of only about ten minutes. They then found themselves within the limits of the town, and had to be very careful. They moved slowly, until Dick identified the house in which he had seen the girl, and then he named four of the youths and told them to go and stand guard, and if there was danger, for them to come to the house at once and notify the three who were to enter.

For this task Dick had selected Bob Estabrook and Mark Morrison as the two who were to accompany him, and as soon as the four had stationed themselves the three went to work. They examined the windows on the ground floor, and finally found one at the side of the building which could be opened. They opened it and quickly but carefully entered. They paused and listened. They were struck by the silence which seemed over all; they could not hear a sound to indicate that the house was occupied.

Presently they moved forward, and Dick opened a door which showed the kitchen was beyond. A candle was burning on the table, and seated near, sound asleep, was a big, fat negress.

Dick softly closed the door and they made their way along the hall. He wished to get upstairs, for there was where he had seen the prisoner. They soon found the stairway and ascended to the second floor.

Dick had a good idea of location, and made his way along the hall till the front of the house was reached. Then he tried the door on the left. It opened, and when they entered the room they found that it was unoccupied. Looking through the window it was seen that there were strong iron bars on the outside.

"I believe this is the room the girl was in," whispered Dick, "but she isn't here now."

"Perhaps they have taken her to some other room," suggested Mark.

"I begin to fear they have taken her to some other house," replied Dick gravely.

"Let's make a careful search," suggested Bob; "if she's in the house we will find her."

Dick acquiesced in this, and they made their way along the hall and looked into every room they came to. All were empty, and they could not understand it.

"The house seems to be deserted," said Mark, in a whisper.

"Not entirely; you remember the negress in the kitchen, Mark," said Dick.

"That's so."

They entered every room on that floor and then made their way up into the attic. There were no finished rooms up there, it being merely one big, rough compartment, and there was no sign that the girl had been held prisoner there. Having finished the upstairs the three went back down onto the ground floor, and proceeded to look through the rooms there.

They found no one, and, determined to make thorough work, they went down into the cellar and looked all around. The girl was not there. The youths were greatly disap-



pointed, and were just on the point of returning to the first floor when they were startled by hearing a series of terrible yells.

"Great guns! that must be Jim!" exclaimed Bob. "I wonder what has scared him now?"

"I don't know, Bob; but I judge that we had better get out of here in a hurry. Come!"

The youths rushed upstairs and to the window, through which they had entered. They looked out, and, sure enough, there came the "Liberty Boys' " "Jonah," yelling at the top of his voice, with a horde of redcoats at his heels. He had "queered" the whole business, and all that the "Liberty Boys" could do was to jump through the window and flee.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE "JONAH" WOUNDED.

This they proceeded to do, and they ran with all possible speed, Jim keeping close behind them, still yelling. This would not do, however, so Dick slackened his speed until Jim was alongside and then said: "Hush, Jim! Stop your yelling. It doesn't do any good, and we will never be able to throw our pursuers off the track if you keep it up."

"A-all ri-right, D-Dick!" stammered Jim. "I—I'll k-keep s-still."

"See that you do! Now, run with all your might!"

"Halt!" yelled the redcoats. "Stop, or we will fire!"

Dick made no reply. He cast a quick glance over his shoulder and measured the distance as well as he could. "I don't believe their muskets will carry up," he thought; "and, anyway, it is so dark they can't take aim. It will be entirely by accident if they succeed in doing any damage."

Onward the four ran, and presently there was the crack, crack! of muskets, and a number of bullets whistled past the fugitives. One bullet struck Jim, inflicting a small flesh wound, and he gave utterance to a yell that could have been heard half a mile, and leaped forward as if shot out of a cannon.

"Oh, I'm shot—I'm shot!" he howled. "I'm er dead boy! Oh, w'y did I go inter this heer bizness, ennyhow? I'm shot! I'm killed!"

"He seems to be possessed of considerable strength and energy for one who is killed," said Bob, sarcastically. "He

is not badly hurt, that we may be sure of, for it is impossible to hurt a 'Jonah.' "

"Where did the bullet strike you, Jim?" asked Dick, who leaped forward and managed to overhaul the frightened youth.

"In ther side—oh, I know I'm er dead boy!"

"I hardly think you are seriously hurt, Jim."

"Ye think not?"

"That is what I think. If you were badly hurt you could not keep on running."

"Waal, I hope thet I hain't; but I'm erfeerd I am."

The four ran onward with such speed that they gradually left their pursuers in the rear. They were soon clear of the town and within the friendly shelter of the timber, and then they felt safe.

"They can't catch us now," said Bob, in a tone of satisfaction.

"No; we can easily get away from them," said Dick; "and now I wonder if they captured either of the boys?"

"I don't think they did," said Jim.

"What makes you think so?"

"Waal, ye see, the redcoats wuz comin' down ther street I wuz on, an' ther other boys wuz quite erways off. They shorely heerd me, an' got erway."

"They surely did hear you!" said Bob, sarcasm in his voice.

"Hello! What's that?" suddenly exclaimed Mark.

It was the other three youths, who had come this far and stopped, to see if their comrades would escape. It was a joyous meeting and all were well pleased. They had escaped; not one had been captured.

They kept on going as they feared the redcoats might try to follow them even though they were in the timber, and the three explained how they managed to get away. They had heard Jim's yells and had taken the alarm. Still, they had not run at once, but had made their way in the direction of the house in which Dick and his two comrades were, in the hope that they might be able to aid their comrades in some way. They had found this an impossibility, however, and had then hastened away, reaching the timber ahead of the four, as we have seen.

The party made its way back to the encampment, and no further attempt was made to enter the town that night, as the redcoats would be on the lookout and it would be suicide, almost, to do so.

Dick had examined Jim's wound as soon as they reached camp, and while he found it was not at all serious, it was more severe than he had expected to find it. Jim had lost



considerable blood, and was somewhat weak; but braced up after the wound was dressed, and felt better.

Dick told Bob that he thought it would be a good chance to get rid of Jim, however. "He will do us more harm than good if we keep him with us," he said; "he is a good-hearted fellow, however, and means well, and for his folks' sake I would not have liked to dismiss him from the company. But now that he is wounded we can use that as an excuse and get him to go home and stay there. What do you think about it?"

"I think you are right, Dick. It is a good chance to get rid of him. He is a regular 'Jonah,' and would have been continually getting us into hot water."

So it was decided; and after breakfast next morning Dick suggested to Jim that he had better go home. "Your wound is not dangerous—if you are where you can be well taken care of," he said; "but to stay here and rough it, might be to aggravate the wound and cause your death."

"All right; I'll go hum," said Jim; "I don't feel enny too good, thet's er fack. Yes, I'll go hum."

"Bob and I will go with you," said Dick.

They bridled and saddled their horses, assisted Jim to mount his animal, leaped into the saddles and rode away. It was an hour's ride, and when they arrived at the home of the Slocums they were greeted pleasantly; but when Jim's parents found that he was wounded, they were frightened and worried, till Dick told them the wound was not serious.

"He will be all right in a couple of weeks," said Dick, reassuringly.

Jim had not much more than got in the house and seated, before a girl came rushing in and threw her arms around his neck. "Oh, Jim!" the girl cried, "I'm so glad ter see ye, an' so sorry ter know ye hev be'n wounded. I knowed jes' how et would be w'en ye j'ined ther ban' uv 'Libbety Boys'! But ye'll stay ter hum now, won't ye, Jim?"

"Uv course I'll hev ter stay erwhile, Molly," said Jim, giving the girl a smack. "An' ef ye say so, I won't go erway erg'in."

"Oh, goody! I do say so, Jim!" the girl cried. "I don't want ye ter go 'way ter war enny more. Ye'll be killed, nex' time; I jes' know ye will!"

"Then I won't go, Molly!" the youth declared.

Dick and Bob looked at each other with a satisfied expression in their eyes. "That is Molly Cone, his sweetheart, Dick," whispered Bob; "and I guess we are all right now. She doesn't want him to go to war any more, and that will settle it."

"Yes, it simplifies matters, Bob," was the reply. "It will give us a chance to let Jim out without hurting the feelings of himself, his sweetheart or his folks."

"You are right."

"Say, Dick an' Bob," said Jim, proudly, "this heer is Molly Cone—ye know, I tole ye erbout 'er—an' some day we air goin' ter hitch up."

The youths acknowledged the introduction, and then Dick said: "That will be all right, Jim—what Miss Molly wants you to do; you need not come back to us if you don't wish to. The fact is, I think we will be away from this part of the country before you will be able to get out and around again."

"All right; an' thank ye, Dick," said Jim. "Waal, I've be'n er soldjer, an' even got woounded, so I hev sumthin' ter be proud uv, hain't I?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"An' I'm proud uv 'im, too!" said Molly.

"That is right," said Bob; "and don't you let him get away from you again, Miss Molly."

"I hain't ergoin' ter."

Dick and Bob remained an hour, talking, and then bidding their friends good-by, they rode away. Just as they reached the main road, and were about to ride across it, a wagon came in sight around the bend and Dick said: "Wait a moment, Bob. Here comes the man I went into the town with the other day. I wish to ask him a few questions."

They stopped and waited, and when the man reached them he brought his horses to a stop. "Whoa!" he said to the animals. "So et's ye, is et?" to Dick. "I'll swow, I thort I'd mos' likely never see ye erg'in."

"Well, I'm still here. By the way, I wish to ask you a few questions."

"Go erhead; I'll answur 'em ef I kin."

"All right; first, then, have you heard anything further regarding the girl, Miss Perkins, I think you said her name was, who was missing from her home?"

"Yas, I've heerd more erbout 'er," was the reply; "she's ter hum now."

"Is that so?"

"Yas; one of Perkins' nabors wuz pas' my place airly this mornin', an' he sed she hed come hum."

"Well, and where had she been?"

"In Petersburg; thet wuz her we seen in ther house ther other day, ez ye thort et might be."

"Ah, it was?"

"Yas; she wuz captered an' kerried ter Petersburg by order uv one uv ther under-orsifers—er capt'in er major er



sumthin—but Gineral Cornwallis, he heerd tell uv ther matter an' he made ther orsifer let ther gal go."

"Ah, he did?"

"Yas; an' so she went home."

"Well, that is good news."

"Yas, so et is. Et'll save ye ther trubble uv tryin' ter resky her."

"We have already had the trouble; we tried to rescue her last night."

"Ye did?"

"Yes; and found that she was not in the house."

"Waal, waal!"

"We were discovered by the redcoats and chased out of the town, so had no further opportunity of searching for her. It is as well, for she was at home at that very time."

"Yas. Waal, ye did do some resky bizness in venturin' inter Petersburg when et is full uv redcoats!"

"Oh, not so very risky; we are used to that sort of thing, and know just what to do."

"I s'pose so; waal, good day. I mus' be gittin' on in with this heer truck."

"Look out for the fellow who steals cabbage!" said Dick, with a smile.

"I'll keep my eyes open fur 'im, but I don' expeck he'll bother me enny more."

"I judge not."

Then the man drove on toward Petersburg, and the two youths rode across the road, and plunging into the timber made their way back to the encampment.

"Everything quiet?" Dick asked of Mark Morrison.

"Yes, Dick; we haven't seen any sign of the redcoats, and I have kept a man on the lookout in the top of that tall tree all the time. He can see right into the town, and reports that everything is quiet there."

"That is good."

"Yes."

"I was afraid the redcoats would try to hunt us up to-day."

"They may make the attempt later on; as yet they have made no move toward doing so."

"True; though I hope that they won't. I don't want to be forced to change my camping ground again till we are through in these parts and ready to return to Richmond."

The redcoats did not make any effort to try to find the youths so they didn't have to change their camping place, and that night Dick made his way to the town on a spying expedition. He succeeded in learning a few things of importance, but not all that he wished to learn, so they re-

mained in camp another day; when night came Dick again entered the town and was gone several hours. When he returned he was in good spirits.

"I think I have learned all that it is necessary I should learn," he said.

"Then we will leave these parts, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Yes."

"When?"

"Right away."

"This very night, eh?"

"Yes; just as soon as we can break camp and get ready for the start."

"Jove! I hate to go away without striking the British a blow!"

"It is necessary, Bob."

"Why so?"

"I have learned that the British are going to advance upon Richmond, and we must get back there at once and warn General Lafayette."

"Why not send a messenger and let the rest of us stay down here and watch for an opportunity to strike the redcoats a blow?"

"That isn't a bad idea," said Dick, after pondering a few moments; "we had better break camp, however, and move a mile or two farther north. We are too close to the town here, and too far to one side. They might get past us."

"That's true; well, just so we don't go clear back to Richmond right away, is all I care for."

They broke camp and made their way over to the main road which led northward. It happened that a party of redcoats, to the number of a hundred at least, was coming up the road, and not a hundred yards distant. Dick quickly gave the youths the command to get ready.

"We'll strike them a blow that will surprise them," he said; "wait till they are opposite, and then, when I give the word, let them have a volley that will do them all the damage possible."

On came the redcoats. They were talking and laughing, and were evidently utterly unsuspecting of danger. The night was clear, and it was easy to see them. Suddenly, just as they came opposite the youths hidden in the edge of the timber, Dick gave the word, and crash! roar! went the weapons of the "Liberty Boys."

The redcoats were taken entirely by surprise, and wild yells of fright and amazement went up from their lips. Mingled with the yells were the groans of the wounded and dying, while the horses reared, plunged and snorted, trampling on the forms on the ground.



It was a terrible scene, and in the midst of the uproar came another volley from the roadside. This was sufficient. The redcoats whirled their horses and galloped like mad back toward Petersburg.

The "Liberty Boys" gave utterance to wild cheers, ending with the battle-cry: "Down with the king! Long live Liberty!"

Then they rode away, up the road, at a gallop. They reasoned that the redcoats would sally forth from Petersburg in great numbers and give chase, and this was what did happen; but thanks to the start which the youths got, the enemy could not overhaul them and they got clear away.

Dick decided that it would be best for him to go straight on to Richmond, however, and they did so. They got to the city about eleven o'clock, and Dick went to headquarters, and was glad to find General Lafayette still up, though on the point, as he said, of retiring.

Dick made his report, and when the general heard that the British were figuring on marching upon Richmond, he was somewhat excited. "There are too many of them for me to try to hold the city," he said; "I shall have to beat a retreat, I guess, Dick."

"I judge that it will be safest, sir."

"Yes, safest and best."

The patriot army did beat a retreat, next morning, and Cornwallis came up from Petersburg and tried to catch Lafayette, but failed. The youthful general was too shrewd for even the astute British veteran.

In spite of their "Jonah," in the person of Jim Slocum, who had very nearly "queered" everything, Dick and his "Liberty Boys" had done some very good work in the vicinity of Petersburg, for they had killed and wounded nearly fifty of the redcoats in the encounter, and the information which Dick had secured, through his spying, had made it possible for Lafayette to foil the British in their attempt to catch him.

#### THE END.

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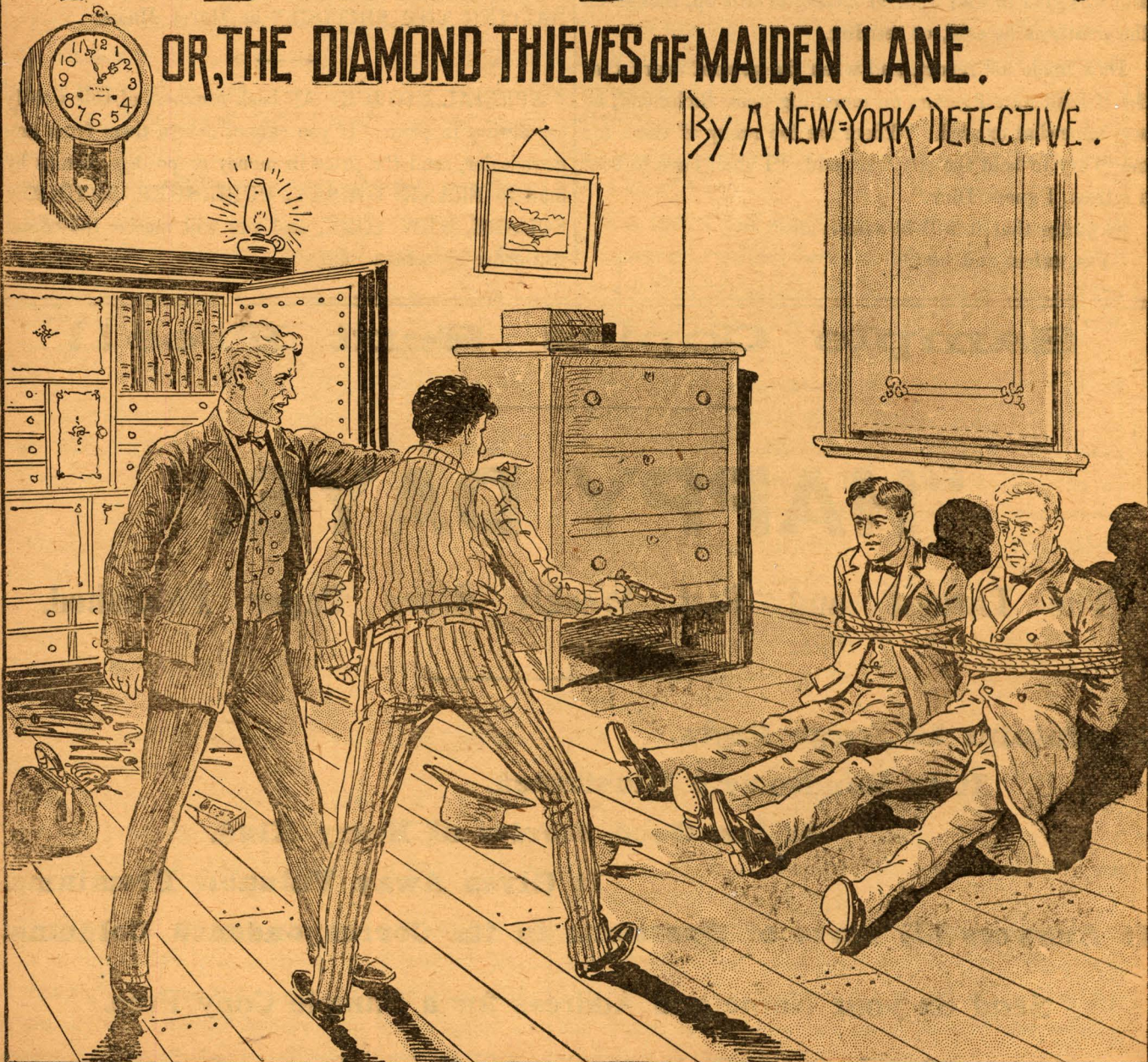
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